Inclusive Education: Participation of Children with Disabilities in Australian Mainstream Preschools

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Abstract

Inclusive education – is it rhetoric or reality? There appears to be a lack of studies on the participation of children with disabilities in mainstream preschools (Law, King, Petrenchik, Kertoy, & Anaby, 2012). Studies into inclusive education have mostly been conducted to understand inclusive education in the context of different countries, and the broad area of teacher development, with less attention at the classroom or practice level. The dominant models available to explain practice and the outcomes of research include a medical model and social model (Bøttcher & Dammeyer, 2016).This study is framed by a cultural-historical perspective, which explored the process of participation of children with disabilities in Australian mainstream preschool settings. With regard to exploring the participation process of children with disabilities, the dialectical interplay between preschool support and children's actions was investigated using the concepts of cultural-historical theory on disability. Vygotsky's concepts of the "primary and secondary disability," "alternative ways of development" and "social situation of development" were used to understand a deeper participation of children with disabilities in relation to practice.

Four focus children (mean age 3.71 years), attending the same mainstream preschool in South-east Melbourne, Australia, were followed and video recorded in different activity settings of the preschool. The preschool teacher and other staff were recorded in video observation as they were interacting with the focus children. Additionally, the researcher interviewed the preschool teacher and other staff to learn more in-depth about the inclusive practice in the preschool. In total, 40 hours of video observation data and four hours of video interview data were collected. Further, documents (attendance record, instruction plans, and artworks) and photographs were obtained. Data were analysed following Hedegaard's three levels of interpretation (Hedegaard, 2008c).

This study found that the focus children and preschool practice co-constructed roundabout (alternative) ways of development when children experienced difficulties. Thus the secondary disabilities were confronted and participation possibilities were ensured, with just a few divergences. This study found the dialectical interplay between the preschool demands and the child motives created developmental conditions for children with disabilities while the child experienced emotional validation. It was also found that focusing on disability rather than the strengths of a child can mislead educators when designing support strategies. The findings of this study coincided with Vygotsky's argument that each child experiences developmental conditions differently as their relationships with the situations are different. The category of disability cannot fully inform the child's unique developmental conditions. Thus understanding of each child's Social Situation of Development (SSD) is crucial.

Therefore, the outcomes of this study contribute to the position that disability should be counted as demographic information, and educators should understand the child as a whole in order to battle the secondary disability in preschool practices. This study contributes to researching children with disabilities and to rethinking disability and inclusive practices in relation to the child and the preschool environment in which the child participates. Future avenues for studying the inclusion of children with disabilities have been identified in relation to a newly emerged cultural-historical model of inclusive preschool practice.

Thesis including published works declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

This thesis includes *two* original paper published online in a peer reviewed journal and *one* submitted publications. The core theme of the thesis is *participation of children with disabilities in early years' education*. The ideas, development and writing up of all the papers in the thesis were the principal responsibility of myself, the student, working within the *Faculty of Education* under the supervision of *Dr Marie Hammer and Laureate Professor Marilyn Fleer*.

The inclusion of co-authors reflects the fact that the work came from active collaboration between researchers and acknowledges input into team-based research.

In the case of Chapters 5 and 6 my contribution to the work involved the following:

Thesis Chapter	**Publication Title**	**Status** *(published, in press, accepted or returned for revision, submitted)*	**Nature and % of student contribution**	**Co-author name(s) Nature and % of Co-author's contribution**	**Co-author(s), Monash student Y/N***
Chapter 5	*Inclusion of a child with expressive language difficulties in a mainstream Australian preschool – roundabout ways can create opportunities for participation*	*Published online first*	*Student contributed 80% by Concept formation and collecting data and writing first draft*	*1) Marilyn Fleer's, 15% input into write up and key ideas* *2) Nikolai Veresov's, 5% input as conceptual guideline*	No No
Chapter 6	*Understanding the child in relation to practice and rethinking inclusion: A study of children with autism spectrum disorder in mainstream preschools*	*Published online first*	*Student contributed 80% by Concept formation and collecting data and writing first draft*	*1)Marilyn Fleer's 10% input into write up and conceptual guideline* *2) Marie Hammer's 10% input into write up and conceptual guideline*	No No

I have not renumbered sections of submitted or published papers in order to generate a consistent presentation within the thesis.

Student signature: [redacted] **Date:** 16 December 2020

The undersigned hereby certify that the above declaration correctly reflects the nature and extent of the student's and co-authors' contributions to this work. In instances where I am not the responsible author I have consulted with the responsible author to agree on the respective contributions of the authors.

Main Supervisor signature: [redacted] **Date:** 16 December 2020

Acknowledgements

Officially a PhD journey starts after enrolment in the course but its historical starting point is a long way back. I was born in a middle class family in Bangladesh where girls' education was a dream or fantasy. My grandma wanted to study and graduated primary school with a scholarship. Unfortunately, childhood marriage snatched her dream of further education. My mother escaped childhood marriage but dropped out of higher secondary college due to marriage. I am lucky that my mother, Rabeya Begum, and my father, Mohammad Abdul Hannan, created good conditions for my education.

I had strong motivation and imagination to pursue the unknown. One of my childhood dreams was to go abroad to explore new cultures. Being a child of the middle class family of a developing country, I imagined higher education as a ticket to fly overseas. Moreover, through my academic journey, the childhood dream took specific shape through my research interests. Finally, my dream came true through an Australian Leadership Award 2010 and I flew to South Australia to study Master of Education (Special Education) at Flinders University. Consequently, an Endeavour Postgraduate Fellowship and Scholarship 2015 supported my Doctoral enrolment at Monash University. I am grateful to the Australian Government and all case managers who supported my journey by keeping close contact with me, the host university and the funding department.

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ABA	Applied Behavioural Analysis
ACECQA	Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority
APCP	Assessment of Preschool Children's Participation
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
BEd	Bachelor of Education
CP	Cerebral Palsy
DEEWR	Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations
ECA	Early Childhood Australia
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ECI	Early Childhood Intervention
ECIA	Early Childhood Intervention Australia
EYLF	Early Years Learning Framework
ICF	International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health
ICF-CY	International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health for Children and Youth
ICIDH	International Classification of Impairment, Disability and Handicapped
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individual Education Plan
IJIE	International Journal of Inclusive Education
IQ	Intelligence Quotient

ISP	Inclusive Support Program
MEd	Master of Education
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
NPD	National Pupil Database
NQF	National Quality Framework
PEM-CY	Participation and Environment Measure for Children and Youth
SSD	Social Situation of Development
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UPIAS	Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation
USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organization
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

Chapter 1: Background of the study

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Introduction

Inclusive education philosophy is getting a good deal of attention in national and international education policies, but in terms of implementation, it requires more investigation. According to Slee (2014), despite social movements and the advancement in educational philosophy, inclusive schooling seems more rhetoric than reality. As an example, Slee (2014) mentioned that the policy and practice outcomes of inclusion are not consistent in Australia. Notably, there is a dilemma with regard to the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream settings. Teachers are often reluctant about the placement of children with disabilities in their class on the grounds that they are not skilled to teach these children (Florian, 2014).

In Australia, teachers also need to be well prepared for an inclusive classroom (Forlin, Chambers, Loreman, Deppeler, & Sharma, 2013). Slee (2014) referred to the Victorian Auditor–General's report (2012), which highlighted the fact that the Australian government spent almost $AUD 2.6 billion on the education of children with disabilities between 2006 and 2012. Despite this, there was not any effective follow-up to investigate how this investment helped to enhance the educational experiences of children with disabilities. Anderson and Boyle (2015) reported an increased placement of students with additional needs in segregated settings in spite of the government's commitment to inclusive education. Moreover, the placement in mainstream institutes does not always guarantee the inclusion of children with disabilities. Ainscow (2005) explained clearly that presence in educational settings is not necessarily about inclusion, but all children's participation and achievement are key factors for inclusive practices.

Studies on the participation of children with disabilities have been evolving recently. Raghavendra (2013) expressed his frustration about the limited research on the participation of

children with disabilities and urged for more research on this topic in various contexts of different countries. In a quantitative study, Coster et al. (2013) have found that students with disabilities are participating in school activities less than children without disabilities. Some researchers emphasised qualitative or mixed-method enquiry about the participation of children with disabilities (e.g., Granlund, 2013; King, 2013).

Moreover, the inclusion of children with disabilities in preschools has received less attention in research (Law et al., 2012; Pelatti, Dynia, Logan, Justice, & Kaderavek, 2016). Therefore, we know very little about the participation of preschool children with disabilities in mainstream settings. I am interested in addressing this gap in the literature by further exploring the participation of preschool children with disabilities. This study may help researchers and practitioners to better understand what inclusion means from the perspective of children and to create conditions for better participation of children with disabilities from the early years of life.

This study will explore the participation of children with disabilities in preschool through the lenses of the cultural-historical theory developed by Lev Vygotsky. However, Vygotsky's insights about children with disabilities and their development are still not widely known in academia (Gindis, 1999; Smagorinsky, 2012). As a result, few studies have used Vygotsky's theoretical position regarding children with disabilities (e.g., Bøttcher, 2012; Fleer & March, 2015; Morcom & MacCallum, 2012). This study will take a step towards addressing the gap in this body of work. In particular, the study will address the gap which is situated in the intersection (marked with an arrow, Figure 1.1) of the cultural-historical theory, inclusion in preschool and participation of children with disabilities.

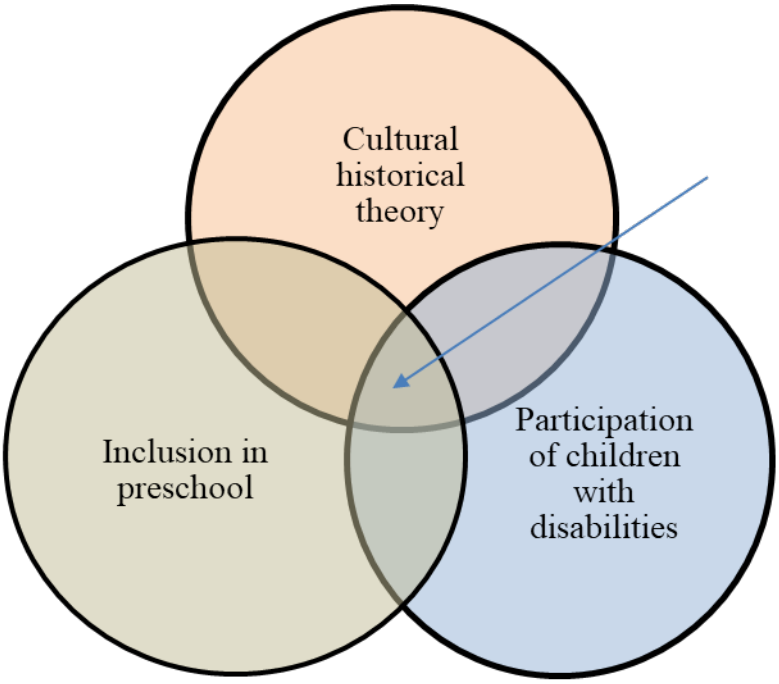

Figure1.1: The gap in the intersection of inclusion in preschool, participation and cultural-historical theory

Personal impetus for the study

Both my personal and professional experiences motivated me to research the central phenomenon of inclusion, as illustrated in Figure 1.1. While I was a secondary school student, a television program on children with special needs nudged my awareness about social justice for children with disabilities. In my tertiary education, I studied Bachelor of Education (BEd) and Master of Education (MEd) with a major in special education. Later I worked professionally for disadvantaged children who were at risk of exclusion from early grades of primary schools in Bangladesh. I did not experience disability myself but reflecting on my journey I found that the seed of social justice planted by the television program has grown within me. I have prepared myself to raise my voice for inclusive education and inclusive society through research.

In a study undertaken prior to my PhD, I (Johora, 2012) found most of the mainstream school headteachers (school principals in Bangladesh are designated as headteacher) in

Bangladesh expressed positive attitudes towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schools. At the same time, they also showed their concern about their lack of knowledge and skills to address the special needs of students. Moreover, the headteachers of special schools in Bangladesh claimed that children with disabilities struggle in mainstream schools, as teachers in mainstream schools do not address special needs adequately (Johora & Ahsan, 2015). The special school headteachers also added that the participation and success of children with disabilities depend on how much they can cope with the existing education system (Johora & Ahsan, 2015).

In the above circumstances, some children with disabilities are continuing their education and some are dropping out (Zulfiqar, Hossain, Shahinujjaman & Hossain, 2018). If the teachers do not have enough knowledge and skills in relation to the unique needs of students, how can they assist them in the classroom? Why are children with disabilities dropping out of mainstream education settings? What are the enabling factors behind the success of children with disabilities who are continuing their education successfully in the mainstream? Are they really included in mainstream education or experiencing a different form of exclusion? All the experiences and questions motivated me to explore the participation of children with disabilities in mainstream education in-depth as the goal of inclusion is not “dumping” children with disabilities into mainstream settings but confirming their full participation, learning and development.

As a postgraduate student (Special Education) in Australia, I had the opportunity to experience some challenges as well as success stories in South Australian schools. I have visited “inclusive schools” which had special units for children with disabilities. Most of the Australian states, except Tasmania and Victoria, were practising “partial inclusion” by establishing special classes, special units or special centres on mainstream school premises (Forlin et al., 2013). Those schools merely housed the special school in their yard, and physically presented special

centres as a form of segregation. I have also observed pull-out traditions for students with learning difficulties, which is also a controversial method as it segregates the student for a certain period in school. On the other hand, the use of different technologies for students with communication difficulties was very inspiring. Some devices were even modified to cater to a unique need of the students. It was nice to meet a student with hearing impairment who successfully continued education in a mainstream school and was going to complete her secondary school.

I did not have the opportunity to experience inclusion of children with disabilities in Australian preschools. However, I experienced the transition of my son from an overseas preschool to an Australian preschool. I left my home country for the purpose of study in the middle of 2015. It was a great transition challenge for the whole family. My son left his home, preschool, friends, relatives, secondary caregivers in our home country. My son started his preschool journey in the middle of the year in Melbourne. It was very challenging for my son to make friends in the middle of the academic year, coming from a different country, with a different language.

I found he was not enjoying his preschool much as most of the time he refused to go there. Most days I noticed the teacher mentioned that my son played a lot with Tania (pseudonym). I cannot remember any other name the teacher mentioned in five months. On the day of the closing ceremony, I noticed my “shy” boy was running here and there to play with others, but no one was counting him in their circle. He was running with them **but not playing,** he was attending the situation **but not participating fully**. How much did the educators make an effort to help my son making friends? How inclusive are preschool practices? What would they do if there were any children with disabilities who may have more special needs?

Thus, my personal and professional experiences keep motivating me to explore inclusive practices in mainstream educational settings. In this thesis I explore the participation of children with disabilities in Australian mainstream preschools as to date the research has been limited (Law et al., 2012; Raghavendra, 2013).

Purpose of the study

This study aimed to explore the participation process of children with disabilities in mainstream preschools in Australia using cultural-historical theory. Regarding the purpose of the study, two focus children with disabilities and two focus children without disabilities were observed and video recorded in their preschool activities in a long-day-care centre over eight months period. The preschool teacher and other staff were interviewed and video recorded to understand more about the inclusive practice in the preschool. I also took regular field notes, attendance records, photos and collected relevant documents from the preschool.

Research questions

Based on the problem identified in the literature and in practice, which was outlined here, the following research questions are presented, in order to study the participation process of children with disabilities in Australian mainstream preschools.

1. How do the Australian mainstream preschool practices create conditions for children with disabilities to participate in preschool activities?
2. How do children with disabilities create their individual pathways for participation in the Australian mainstream preschool activities?
3. What are the potential enablers and barriers for the inclusion of children with disabilities in Australian mainstream preschools?

Significance of the study

To begin, this study will be a single but significant step to address the gap in the literature with regard to exploring the participation of children with disabilities at the preschool level. The findings may help educators to understand a child's strengths and perspectives and understand the child's relationship with the preschool practice and plan accordingly to support their participation and inclusion along with other children. Hopefully, its theoretical position will be helpful to create a different awareness towards disability and explain the participation of children with disabilities differently. The study may play a significant role in advocating for a cultural-historical methodology in research and to advocate for inclusive classroom practices. In a nutshell, a cultural-historical theoretical understanding of disability and inclusion and the evidence-based knowledge that it supports will raise awareness among stakeholders to rethink disability and inclusion of children with disabilities in preschools.

Key terms

The following key terms are explained here to provide a basic understanding of their uses in this study. Chapter 2 provides further information on these key terms and contextual practices.

Inclusive education

This term requires clarification as a misunderstanding, or partial understanding of the word "inclusive education" is evident in practice. For instance, sometimes, inclusive education is only understood as including children with disabilities in mainstream educational institutes (Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn, & Christensen, 2006). Though the movement of inclusive education began with inclusion of children with disabilities, inclusive education does not simply mean inclusion and education of children with disabilities (Forlin et al., 2013).

Inclusive education promotes mainstream education as a right for ***all***, disregarding an individual's social, physical and psychological disadvantages. It is essential to note that inclusive education advocates restructuring the existing education system to address the diverse needs of students as well as the **full participation** of individuals. The children should not be made to fit into the existing education system. The education system should be changed to fit with children's needs. As Salend (2008) stated:

> Effective inclusion improves the educational system for all learners by placing them together in general education classroom – regardless of their learning ability, race, linguistic ability, economic status, gender, learning style, ethnicity, cultural and religious background, family structure, and sexual orientation. (p. 7)

This study particularly focuses on the inclusion of one of the disadvantaged groups – children with disabilities – as it defines its problem and purpose to narrow down its scope. Hopefully, it will not limit the broader understanding of the term "inclusive education".

Disability

Disability can be explained from different angles (see Chapter 3 on different lenses on disability). I believe that we should not use the term "disability" to describe any individual, as every human being is capable of doing something; some may do the same task but in a different way. On the other hand, every human being has limitations. However, the term disability is used here based on its general meaning to communicate with readers. As the Disability Act, 2006 by Victoria State Government defined – disability relates to a person's physical, sensory, neurological impairment, or acquired injuries, intellectual disability, or developmental delay, for which the individual requires long-term supports (Disability Act., 2006).

I have chosen the term "children with disabilities" consciously, whereas many studies preferred to use the term "children with special needs". I mentioned that, personally, I do not like the term, "disability". However, I could not use the phrase "children with special needs" as it

refers to a broader group of children. All children with disabilities can be addressed as children with special needs, but all children with special needs cannot be addressed as children with disabilities. Many socially disadvantaged groups of children may have special needs without having disabilities. United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 1994) has included children with disabilities and children who have disadvantages under the term "children with special educational needs". Therefore, the term "children with disabilities" was chosen to match the study scope.

Preschool

In Australia, preschool is a play-based structured program delivered by a "degree-qualified" teacher for children aged three to five years — in one or two years before they start full-time schooling in foundation grade[1] (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2019b; Tayler, 2016). Preschool programs are delivered in various settings such as stand-alone preschools, long-day-care centres (centre-based day-care) and preschools attached to schools (ABS, 2019b; Kemp, 2016; Tayler, 2016). In some states of Australia, preschools are referred to as kindergartens whereas the term kindergarten refers to the foundation year in a few other states in Australia (ABS, 2019b). This study has collected data from a preschool program delivered in a long-day-care centre in Melbourne, Victoria.

Mainstream

The term mainstream used to refer all kinds (stand-alone, long-day-care and attached to school) of preschools which are not exclusively established to care for and educate children with special needs (e.g., children with disabilities, children in immigration detention). Mainstream preschools

[1] Foundation grade/year is one year full-time education program before starting the primary education. Different terms have been used in different states in Australia to refer to the foundation grade (ABS, 2019b).

follow general curriculum and offer programs to all children in a particular age group of the community.

Participation

It is complicated to define "participation" as it might be understood in many different ways –from a narrow to a broad sense. According to Granlund (2013), "participation is a multi-dimensional construct" (p. 470). "Participation is clearly not a global construct, or [a] single variable, and can be conceptualised in a variety of ways" (King, 2013, p. 466). The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), defines participation as "involvement in a life situation" (World Health Organization [WHO], 2001, p. 14). The definitions mentioned earlier do not provide an in-depth understanding of the nature of involvement in any situation. The following definition describes participation broadly:

> Participation implies learning, playing or working in collaboration with others. It involves making choices about, and having a say in, what we do. More deeply it is about being recognised and accepted for ourselves. (Booth & Ainscow, 2011, p. 11)

Early Childhood Australia's (ECA) statement on inclusion stated, "participation means using a range of approaches to promote engagement in play and learning activities, and a sense of belonging for every child." (Early Childhood Australia [ECA], 2016, p. 9).

Similarly, the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2011) also mentioned two broad aspects of participation – presence and engagement. The physical presence is necessary, but engagement is the most crucial aspect of participation (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2011). Furthermore, engagement is multi-dimensional, which comprises behavioural, cognitive and emotional engagement (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). The first layer of Figure 1.2 is representing this concept.

Black-Hawkins (2010), pointed out three aspects of participation in school life, which are "Access: being there", "Collaboration: Learning together" and "Diversity: recognition &

acceptance" (p.32). These concepts overarch the definition of the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education – see the second layer of Figure 1.2. These aspects also relevant to the Booth & Ainscow's (2011) definition of participation.

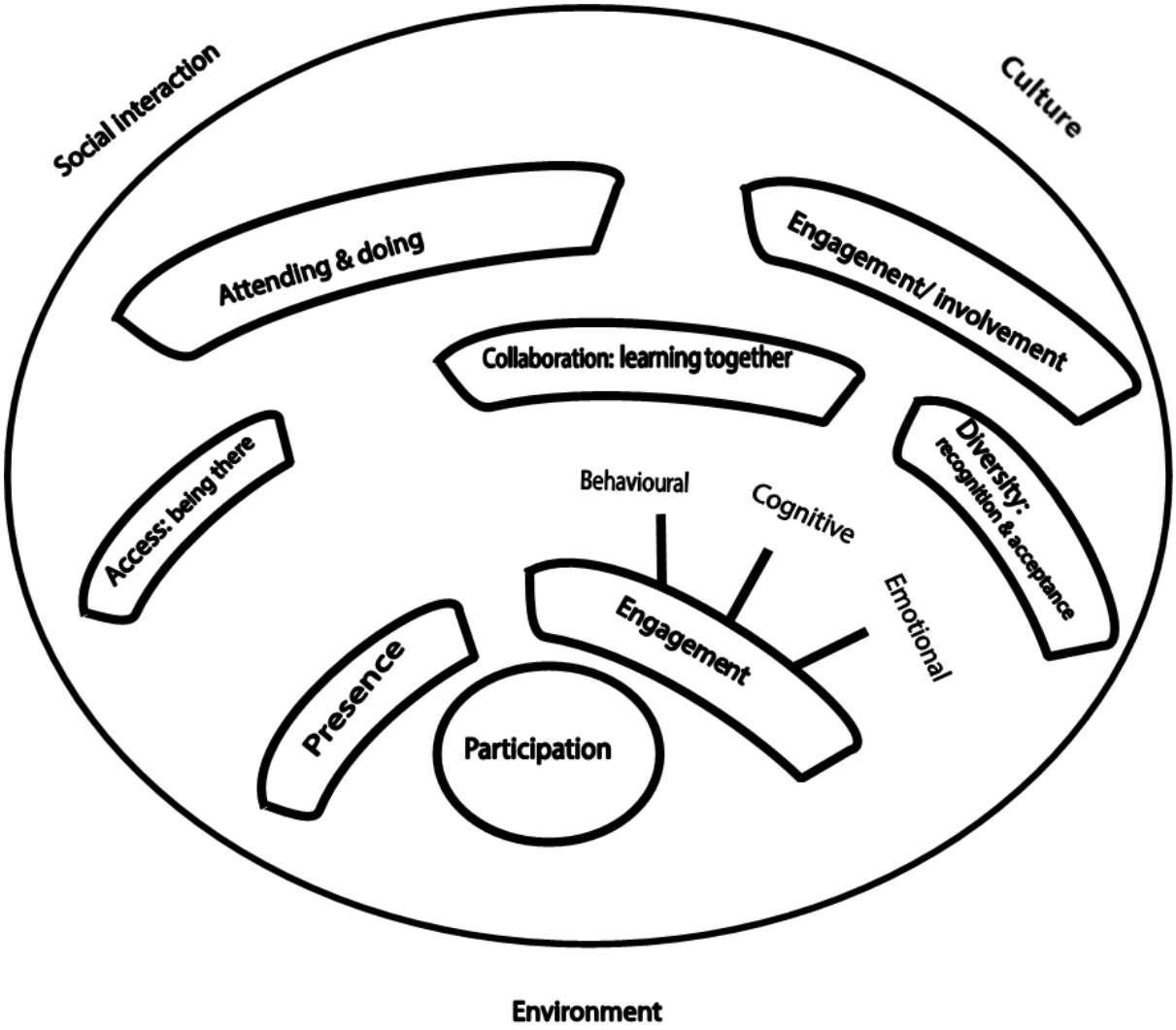

Figure1.2: Participation process

Granlund (2013) and Maxwell, Augustine, and Granlund (2012) mentioned two dimensions of Participation – attending or performing and involvement or engagement. They argued that even performing a task reflects the attendance dimension of participation, which is mostly measured in different studies. Maxwell et al. (2012) criticised the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) or ICF for Children and Youth (ICF-CY) as those did not emphasise the engagement dimension of participation.

Maxwell et al. (2012) proposed a third qualifier beside the existing two (capacity and performance) in ICF and ICF-CY to measure participation completely. Therefore, the category "Attending and doing" covers the concept of presence/access and the behavioural engagement (see Figure 1.2). The category "engagement/involvement" is directly related to "engagement" category in the first layer and "collaboration" and "diversity" category in the second layer (see Figure 1.2).

The environment is another aspect which is a source of development (Vygotsky, 1994b) and is important in understanding participation. Child development is not a natural process but is related to the child's everyday engagement and participation in different institutions (e.g., home, preschool, school) (Fleer & Hedegaard, 2010). Participation in different activities provides children with opportunities to deal with different social demands and possibilities, as well as enabling children to negotiate, to organise and to experience in their own personal way (Højholt & Kousholt, 2018). Physical environment, as well as culture and social environment, are important with regard to child participation (see Figure 1.2). Environment refers to "physical, social and attitudinal environment" (WHO, 2001, p. 16) which can restrict or facilitate participation. It also indicates participation opportunities and their availability, accessibility, flexibility features.

Therefore, it is notable that participation is defined in many ways. However, different definitions are not contradictory; instead, they are complementary. It is challenging to define participation, a multi-dimensional construct, entirely. Compiling the above discussion, participation can be seen as a holistic sum of being present, accepted and recognised in an environment, access to resources and opportunities, active involvement in different activities through behavioural, cognitive and emotional engagement. Such understanding of the concept of participation is also synchronised with the Australian Early Years Learning Framework's

(EYLF) overarching motto: “belonging, being and becoming” (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2009).

The next section will outline the thesis structure.

Overview of the thesis

The thesis is composed of ten chapters.

This chapter (Chapter 1) states the background to the problem and my motive for conducting this study. This chapter also presented the purpose of the study, research questions, and research significance. As well, some keywords were also explained, and the thesis structure is outlined.

Chapter 2 presents a critical review of empirical studies in the field of inclusive education of children with disabilities, along with a brief history of inclusive education and an overview of the current practice of inclusion in Australian early childhood education and care contexts.

Chapter 3 focuses on the theoretical framework of this study. In this regard, this chapter first discusses different theoretical underpinnings in inclusive education research. Then it introduces cultural-historical theory followed by why and how cultural-historical theory offers a frame for this study.

Chapter 4 frames the methodology of this study and presents the detailed research design with the theoretical basis of methodological decisions of the design and field works. Moreover, it introduces the context and participants, including ethical considerations of this study.

Chapter 5 presents a published article which argues that both the preschool and the focus child co-constructed an alternative way to support the child’s communication and participation.

This chapter explicitly answered Research Question 1 and Research Question 2. This article is published online and the details are as follows:

> Fatema Taj Johora, Marilyn Fleer & Nikolai Veresov (2019): Inclusion of a child with expressive language difficulties in a mainstream Australian preschool – roundabout ways can create opportunities for participation, *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, DOI:10.1080/13603116.2019.1609100
>
> To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1609100

Chapter 6 presents a pre-print of a published article which argues that the interplay between the focus child's motive and preschool demand created opportunities for the child to participate in the preschool. This article has been published online in the journal of *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, and the details are as follows:

> Fatema Taj Johora, Marilyn Fleer & Marie Hammer (2021): Understanding the child in relation to practice and rethinking inclusion: A study of children with autism spectrum disorder in mainstream preschools, *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, DOI:10.1016/j.lcsi.2020.100469.
>
> To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2020.100469

Chapter 7 presents a submitted manuscript (under review) which argues that understanding the child's personality and potential is essential to the practice of inclusive education rather than focusing on the biological differences, which dominates in studies that draw on a medical model of inclusion. This manuscript has been submitted to *Early Years: An International Research Journal*. The details of the manuscript are as follows:

> Fatema Taj Johora (XX): The preschool teacher's assumption about a child's ability or disability: Finding a pedagogical password for a child is crucial for inclusion, *Early Years*.

Chapter 8 is a data presentation chapter, and it presents how children with disabilities and children without disabilities participate in the same social situations of the preschool. It argues that the same social situations can lead different social situations of development for each child.

Chapter 9 is also a data presentation chapter, and argues for the potential enablers and barriers for inclusive practice in the preschool and how the dialectic relation between society and institutions matter for inclusive preschool practice.

Chapter 10 brings together the results to answer the research questions and conclude the study through an overall discussion of the findings, followed by contributions, recommendations for future research, and implications for literature and practice.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 2: Literature review

Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the relevant literature on the inclusion of children with disabilities in education. First, it provides a brief background of inclusive education and inclusion of children with disabilities. Second, it informs the Australian context of early childhood education and inclusive practices. Later, this chapter presents a discussion on empirical studies that highlight the gap in the literature on which the study is based. Many studies in this field of research are already reviewed in the included published paper (Chapters 5 & 6) and submitted manuscripts (Chapter 7), as the thesis is structured as a thesis with published work. Therefore, some reviews may overlap, and some repetition may become evident.

History of inclusive education

The recognition of educational rights for children with disabilities is not a recognised historical event. Loreman, Deppeler, and Harvey (2011) informed that the 1872 Education Act declared compulsory education for all youth of a certain age in Victoria, Australia. Yet, in practice, the education system failed to cater to the diverse needs of students at that time. As a result, the Act was amended in 1874 to exclude students who were struggling to learn, from the compulsory requirement. In England, education became a right for *all* children in the 1970s and a segregated educational system was being used to educate children with disabilities (Black-Hawkins, Florian, & Rouse, 2017).

Before the mid-18th century, disability was viewed as a curse, and children with disabilities were commonly perceived as uneducable, or unable (Winzer, 2014). In the 19th century children with disabilities were removed from their home and were sent to institutions in

the name of their care and safety, where education was not the primary goal (Kisanji, 1999; Winzer, 2014). According to Winzer (2014), “Segregation within institutions shielded vulnerable children and youth from [a] callous world and simultaneously relieved the world of disabled people” (p. 25). At the beginning of the 20th century, despite the growth of institutions, special classes and special schools started to expand with the goal of education (Winzer, 2014). However, the special schools operated education programs based on the medical model, and different therapeutic interventions were high priorities in such schools.

Special education was growing fast and resulted in more special schools, more categories of disabilities, and the growth of special pedagogy. This segregated system also received adequate attention and funding (Winzer, 2014). However, parents of children with disabilities started to advocate against exclusion from schools and institutionalisation after World War II (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2015). Special schools started to face strong criticism with regard to poor quality education, watery curriculum, and segregating children completely (Winzer, 2014). After the 1960s, significant philosophical shift reformed special education practice around the world (Artiles et al., 2006; Winzer, 2014). Institutionalisation and segregated education system all come under serious criticism on the grounds of social justice for children with disabilities and consequently integrated education provision come under consideration (Winzer, 2014). The social model of disability, which argues that disability is a result of social discrimination rather than being an individual’s problem, started to influence legislation and policies.

By the end of the 20th century, organizations started to advocate for inclusive education, which addressed the gaps of integration approach and emphasised equity and full participation of *all* children. United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) found the need for teacher development in mainstream schools to support such educational reform and set up a project to develop material and teaching strategies for inclusive schooling in 1993

(Kisanji, 1999). Based on the success of such materials and experiments in inclusive education in different parts of the world, UNESCO organised the 1994 world conference at Salamanca, Spain. This conference resulted in the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994), which was adopted widely by many countries to eradicate exclusion and to promote inclusive education (Kisanji, 1999; Loreman, 2014).

Inclusive education and children with disabilities

Education policies are paying attention to inclusive education approaches for equity and justice as well as for achieving the goal of Education for All. The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994) and later the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006) inspired policymakers to revisit education policy to ensure equity through the inclusion of all excluded and at-risk groups of children in mainstream schools. The focus of inclusive education is vast in order to achieve its core aim to ensure equity and social justice in education. Furthermore, inclusive education philosophy inspires social inclusion going beyond the field of education. For Booth and Ainscow (2011), "It [inclusion] is linked to democratic participation within and beyond education" (p. 20).

Inclusive education approach tries to ensure quality education for all, including disadvantaged children; for example, girls, children from an ethnic minority, children with disabilities, socially stigmatised children. However, sometimes inclusive education is misunderstood as the process of just including children with disabilities in mainstream schools. "It [inclusive education] is not about an aspect of education to do with a particular group of children" (Booth & Ainscow, 2011, p. 20). The inclusion of children with disabilities might be seen as the most debatable and challenging, but not the single goal of inclusive education.

Among the disadvantaged groups, children with disabilities are doubly disadvantaged. With regard to providing education to other disadvantaged groups, we consider their access and presence in mainstream schools. In some countries, where the government or state fail to bring them into mainstream schools due to financial or resource constraints, non-formal schooling is then a second strategy. For example, in Bangladesh, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) are providing a second chance for students who never attended government schools or who dropped out (Zia-Us-Sabur & Ahmed, 2010).

However, the education of children with disabilities faces the on-going dilemma of segregation and mainstreaming. The dilemma is not so much their disadvantaged position in society, like other disadvantaged groups or resource constraints, but rather their ability and inability issues. The education of children with disabilities historically progressed through institutionalisation, segregation, integration and inclusion practices. I prefer and support the practice of inclusive education for children with disabilities, because it offers the opportunity for equity and quality education rather than segregated, potentially isolating special schooling.

Early childhood education and inclusion in Australia

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is well-valued in Australia and the government focuses on quality and accessibility of relevant services (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2014; Tayler, 2016). Australia has six states, and two territories, and the government has three strata; federal, state/territory and local government. The federal and the state/territory governments are both responsible for early childhood care, education, and services for disabilities (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2020). Australia provides early childhood education and care through a diverse range of services from birth of children and services vary across different states/territories. Broadly, services can be categorised in two main types – child care services and preschool services. Child care services provide education and care for children

aged 0-12 years through centre-based/long-day-care, family care, outside school hours care (e.g., after-school care) and other services (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2020). Preschool services aims to provide play-based learning program to children aged 3 to 5 years before they start full-time schooling (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2020).

Preschool programs are not compulsory in Australia but enrolment rates are high, especially in the year prior to formal schooling. Most children participate in a preschool program at age four (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2011). For example, in 2018, 91% children participated in the preschool program in the year before formal schooling (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2020). Preschool services are provided in standalone preschool premises or preschools attached to schools or through integrated programs in centre-based day-care or other integrated approaches (ABS, 2019b; Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2020; Kemp, 2016; Tayler, 2016). Regardless of the type of service provider, preschool programs in Australia are delivered by preschool teachers who have qualified through studying at least three years in early childhood studies at universities (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2020). Recently, different state governments have aimed and targeted to increase the number of preschool teachers who are university-trained for four years in early childhood studies (DEEWR, 2011).

One of the focuses of Australian ECEC is to improve access and participation of vulnerable and disadvantaged children. Disability has been reported for 7.7% (or 357,500) children under 15 years of age in Australia in 2018, which was at the lower of 6.9% in 2012 (ABS, 2019a). Historically, Australia had initiated a general early childhood program for at-risk students and special education program for children with disabilities as early intervention strategies (Petriwskyj, 2010; Sukkar, 2013). Children with mild to moderate disabilities began to access mainstream early childhood education around the mid-1970s (Kemp, 2016). Early Childhood Intervention (ECI)

programs were established to support children with disabilities and their families in the 1970s (ECA & ECIA, 2012).

After the 1990s, several national and international policies (e.g., Disability Discrimination Act, 1992; UNESCO, 1994; United Nations, 2006) formally ensured the right of children with disabilities to attend any mainstream education. Consequently, childcare centres, preschools and schools cannot legally deny access to children with disabilities in their programs. However, the representation of children with disabilities in preschools is less than their representation in the wider communities (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2020). Children with disabilities experience segregation in practice with the rationale and excuse of lack of resources, waiting lists etc. (Kemp, 2016). Moreover, parents sometimes find it challenging to locate a mainstream service which fulfils their child's needs (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2014). Therefore, both segregated and mainstream preschools and schools are available in the Australian education system (Cologon, 2014). Nevertheless, recent changes in Early Childhood Education (ECE) seem to present an opportunity to achieve more successful inclusion in the Australian setting (Kemp, 2016).

Acknowledging the significance of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), the Australian government developed a national guideline for ECEC, the National Quality Framework (NQF), which has been active from 2012 (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority [ACECQA], 2017). Favourably, children's rights, equity, diversity and inclusion underpinned the framework. The NQF framework is linked with the national Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), which framed professional guidelines to develop programs for children from zero to five years of age. Such national frameworks created the opportunity to maintain a common standard throughout the whole country where federal, state and local leaders are working together to achieve agreed qualities in ECEC (Tayler, 2016). The fundamental

theme of the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF) is “belonging”, “being” and “becoming” – every child should go through these aspects of experience (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2009). Like NQF, equity and value for diversity are acknowledged as key principles of the EYLF.

> Early childhood educators who are committed to equity believe in all children’s capacities to succeed, regardless of diverse circumstances and abilities. Children progress well when they, their parents and educators hold high expectations for their achievement in learning. Educators recognise and respond to barriers to children achieving educational success. In response they challenge practices that contribute to inequities and make curriculum decisions that promote inclusion and participation of all children. (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2009, pp. 12-13).

The above statement is robust and appropriate for inclusive practices. Disability Standards for Education 2005 also stated that education providers need to make “reasonable adjustment” to ensure access and participation of a person with disabilities (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006). Children with disabilities may need early intervention programs and service providers may consequently need funds for “reasonable adjustment”. How does the funding process work to support the individual and the provider? The Australian government has the Inclusive Support Program (ISP) which provides support in two ways: a) it provides funding for specialists or equipment or special programs, b) it provides an inclusion support subsidy to the ECEC providers so that they can employ additional staff (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2014). The Commission found that sometimes children cannot access the support as their need does not satisfy eligibility criteria or their diagnosis is pending.

Moreover, early intervention support practices also vary from state to state in Australia and recently the federal and the state/territory governments have taken initiatives to establish consistent services across Australia through the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] (Early Childhood Intervention Australia [ECIA], 2016). NDIS enables the parents or family to choose intervention programs from accredited service providers, and multiple professionals from

ECI and ECEC sector working as a team (ECIA, 2016). The ECEC and the ECI sector developed separately and independently and both sectors experienced the need of collaboration for successful inclusion practices (ECA & ECIA, 2012).

While Australian policies are actively supporting equity, diversity and inclusion, the question is how much the policies are reflected in practices? Anderson and Boyle (2015) argued that despite having national policies and frameworks, practices vary from state to state. Sukkar (2013) criticised the funding process and ECI practices and claimed that many children with disabilities do not access funding. If they do obtain access, it is not in the needed timeframe. Similarly, there are concerns about meaningful participation of children with disabilities in mainstream preschools (Cologon, 2014; Kemp, 2016) despite having NQF, EYLF and other guidelines. Simple physical placement of children with disabilities in the mainstream without appropriate support may draw another form of discrimination rather than inclusion (Petriwskyj, 2010). Parallel mainstream and segregated settings could be a barrier to reforming mainstream settings as inclusive settings (Cologon, 2014). Therefore, it can be said that Australia is going through an initial phase of its inclusion journey.

Research trends in the inclusion of children with disabilities in education

Similar to the historical overview of education for children with disabilities, inclusive education is a new research area. I searched the Google Book Ngram viewer with the phrase “Inclusion of children with disabilities”, and results emerged in the form of the following graph in Figure 2.3. The figure shows that the research on inclusive education started around the 1990s, with the trend going upwards until 2008 (Google Book Ngram viewer showed data until 2008 only).

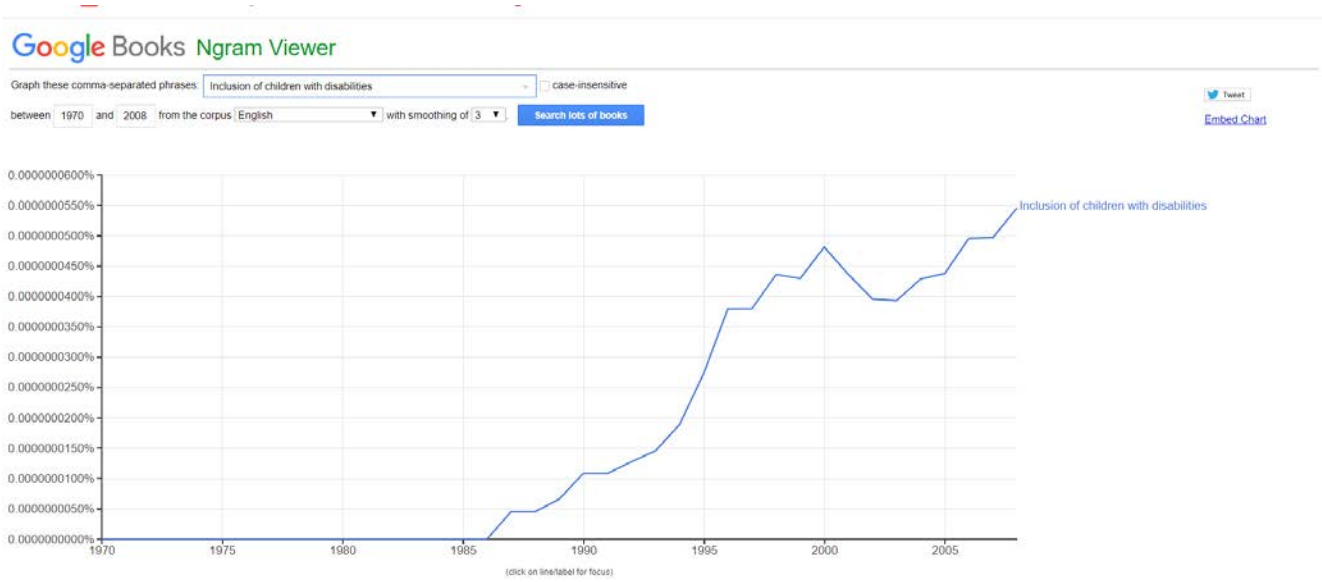

Figure 2.3: Research trend on the inclusion of children with disabilities

Therefore, it can basically be said that inclusive education is a growing field of research but carries a considerable possibility for expansion. Despite a significant increase in studies on inclusive education in the past two decades, specific studies on inclusive classroom practice and the participation of children with disabilities received comparatively less priority. For example, on 1 November 2015, I searched “Inclusive education” with the limits – from 2011 to 2015, full-text, peer-reviewed journals in Monash University library and 1,321 literature entries popped up in this search. The result was sorted by relevance. Therefore, I have selected the first 100 articles to observe the pattern amongst them. I found the following scenario (see table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Trends in inclusive education research

Topic & type of study	Number	Comment
Literature review	53	Half of the articles were literature reviews and among those 24 articles were contextual discussions (e.g., inclusive education in Hong Kong)
Empirical study (47)		
Teacher education or teacher development	17	Most of the empirical studies are teacher-related (31) Only nine studies were about classroom practice and learning-related.
Teachers' attitude/perspective	11	
School leadership	3	
Classroom practice, children's learning, skill development, and participation	9	
Factors of inclusive education	2	
Parents' attitude	1	
Health and others	2	
Repeated in the search result	2	
Total study	100	

Only nine studies among 100 were on classroom practice, learning and participation-related. Most of the empirical studies were on teachers' attitudes and were professional development-related. Therefore, the area of inclusive education should be researched intensively to explore different aspects of this growing field and to ensure equity and quality in education. This study aimed to explore the participation of children with disabilities in preschool practices. The next section will present the review of the empirical studies and selection criteria of studies.

Empirical studies: Scope of the review

This section is based on how empirical studies were reviewed. Primarily, Monash University library search engine, google scholar and ERIC database were used to search relevant literature from 2010 to 2019. Keywords or phrases like "inclusive education/ inclusion", "children with disabilities", "participation", "classroom practice", "cultural-historical theory", "Australia", "Early childhood" and their combinations (using "And") were used to search the literature. The search results were then narrowed down by the preference for peer-reviewed journal articles and

by repeated use by researchers (at least cited five times if published before 2019). Then followed the relevant references used in primary sources and selected references were searched directly with title and author/s' name. While setting limits, I have also included literature outside these limits if I have found any other literature relevant to my study. For example, the study by Black-Hawkins, Florian, and Rouse (2007) and Walker and Berthelsen (2008) on participation of children with disabilities in mainstream education.

The broader area of this study is inclusive education for children with disabilities, and the particular focus of the study is to understand the practical implications of inclusive education policies. Apart from the inclusive education policy and contextual researche, most of the studies aimed to explore teacher perspectives, but fewer studies shed light on children's perspectives. This section of the literature review does not focus on discussion of all existing knowledge on inclusive education. Rather it aims to present recent research on inclusive practice and analyse methodology, methods and findings, thereby aiming to find gaps in literature. This study reviewed the studies on children's participation, and practices in schools and preschools. I have also reviewed empirical studies that used cultural-historical theories to understand and explore the development of children with disabilities and their learnings (see Figure 2.4).

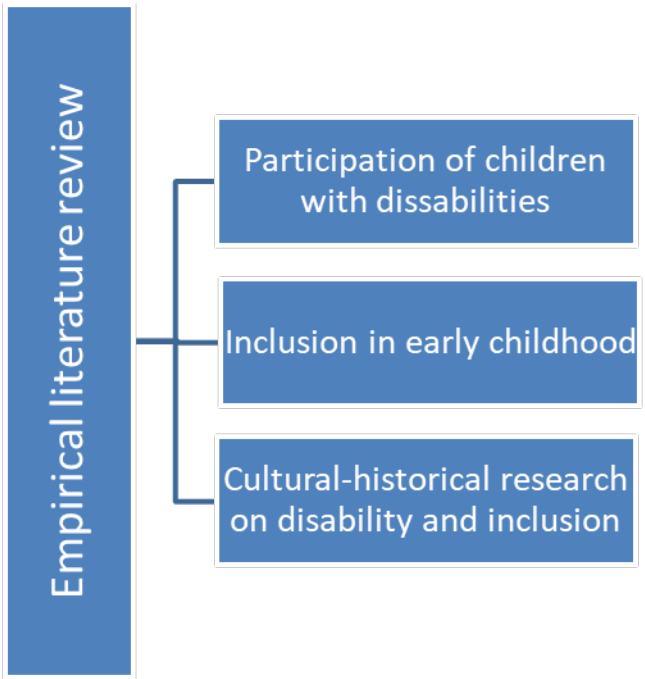

Figure 2.4: Scope of the literature review

Participation of children with disabilities in education

This sub-section presents the studies that focused on the participation of children with disabilities in schools and preschools. In a quantitative study, Law et al. (2012) collected data from 120 preschool children with Cerebral Palsy (CP) to analyse the internal consistency and construct validity of the Assessment of Preschool Children's Participation (APCP) measurement tool. The study found that the APCP has the right internal consistency, and it is useful to identify activity in which preschool children are participating, or otherwise. The APCP distinguished participation of children from low income and high income families. It also measured the difference between the participation of children under and children above four years of age. These quantitative measures of participation do not answer the questions on how and why children participate in some activities or why some activities restrict their participation. Moreover, it does not provide much information about the context or environment where the activities take place.

Another contemporary quantitative study by Coster et al. (2013), examined how environmental factors support or limit the participation of children with disabilities of primary and secondary school age, along with the comparison with children without disabilities of same ages. In this regard, they collected data from 576 parents using the Participation and Environment Measure for Children and Youth (PEM-CY) through the internet. This study found that students with disabilities are participating in school activities less often than children without disabilities. In terms of the environment, both physical and social environments are hindering their participation, as well as the lack of required resources, which is another issue. The responses from parents may provide a partial understanding of students' participation although they have some degree of involvement in children's educational plan and monitoring progress. While quantitative studies have different kinds of implications in academia as well as in practice, those studies cannot provide details about the phenomenon. Such as, this study has failed to give a detailed picture of the social environment and how the environment is supporting or hindering participation.

Apart from the developing participation measure scales and measuring different factors, few studies focused on the quality of methods and practices. In an experimental study (n=2), Bennett, Reichow, and Wolery (2011) found in the United States of America (USA) that a structured approach increased task completion and engagement of preschool children with disabilities. Although the study was conducted in the natural setting of an inclusive preschool, the procedure seems very mechanical, as researchers' social involvements with the children were very minimal and they justified the children's engagement through the puzzle matching tasks. The researchers also acknowledged that this kind of task completion goal would be followed for only a specific short period of the day.

Another study conducted by Pelatti et al. (2016) measured and examined the quality of publicly funded ECE classrooms and Inclusive ECE classrooms in USA. They collected data from 164 classrooms using observation tools and questionnaires. They found inclusive ECE classrooms created more stable emotional environments but, with regard to quality feedback, concept development and language use, their scores are significantly lower than ECE classrooms. They recommended further investigation to find out the reasons behind the differences between ECE classrooms and inclusive ECE classrooms.

Kemp, Kishida, Carter, and Sweller (2013) studied the effect of activity types on the engagement and interactions of children with disabilities in Australian mainstream childcare settings. This study found that children with disabilities engage better in free play and mealtime routine than group activities. However, they also found children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) engage less in free play compared to children with other disabilities. This study also highlighted that researchers rarely explored engagement of preschoolers with disabilities in Australian early childhood education context.

The mixed-method study by Black-Hawkins, Florian, and Rouse (2007) was frequently cited in relevant literature. They aimed to explore the relationship between inclusion and achievement of children with disabilities. The study analysed the National Pupil Database (NPD) to see the connection between students' performance and inclusion. They found some limitations of the database in understanding students' achievement. For example, there were many missing values in the national data set for the students who face difficulties in learning. Authors assumed that these students might not get a chance to appear in the test. They also pointed out the need for a qualitative inquiry in this regard. As a result, they also conducted a multi-method case study to answer their research questions.

In the qualitative part of the study, Black-Hawkins et al. (2007) used Framework for Participation as their research tool and methodological lenses. Four schools were chosen as cases in this study, two primary schools and two secondary schools. This qualitative study found the four schools were inclusive in terms of their student population and admission policies. Three schools among four were found as high achieving schools in terms of students' performance in different tests. Beyond the relationship of academic achievement, it also explored the relationship among stakeholders, teaching-learning process and concerns for inclusion. This study inspires such investigation in the preschool level as well. Hurley and Horn (2010) conducted their study on inclusion in early childhood education. They found both family members and professionals valued active participation of children with disabilities in inclusive practices. Participants also valued accessibility of all children in inclusive practice regardless of the severity of disabilities, professional development for educators and opportunity for collaboration among families, professionals, teachers and administrators.

Subsequently, few studies explored the participation of children with disabilities in preschools and schools, including different population size, participants, and target groups. Studies used quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods research design to explore the participation of children with disabilities. It is noteworthy that few studies aimed to explore holistic participation process of the preschooler in mainstream preschools. Moreover, further research is recommended in the literature to explore the participation of children with disabilities in Australian early childhood education contexts.

Inclusion in early childhood education

This sub-section mainly presents the studies conducted in early childhood education, focusing on different aspects of the inclusion of children with disabilities. For instance, studies focusing on

the teachers' attitudes and teachers' preparedness, studies on parents' attitudes, peers' attitudes, and so on.

Teachers' attitude and preparedness

Many studies examined teachers' attitudes and competence around inclusive practices to understand and to guide the inclusive practice in early childhood. Hsieh and Hsieh (2012) found that ECE teachers in the USA have a moderately positive attitude towards inclusive education. A hierarchical regression analysis of their data (n=130) indicated that lead-teachers have a more positive attitude than assistant teachers. Moreover, teachers with a positive experience with children with disabilities tended to have a positive attitude towards the inclusion of children with disabilities. Their findings resonate with Kwon, Hong, and Jeon's (2017) study in the USA, as they found that a Bachelor degree in ECE and experience with children with disabilities were positively correlated with teachers' attitudes towards disability and inclusion. In contrast, Hoskin, Boyle, and Anderson (2015) found preschool pre-service teacher's (n=139) prior contact or experience with children with disabilities does not influence their attitude towards inclusive education. Yet, their study found the pre-service teachers have a positive attitude towards inclusive philosophy, although they showed concerns about their ability to teach in inclusive programs.

Similarly, Majoko (2016) found that Zimbabwean pre-service teachers in ECE have positive attitudes towards inclusion but have concerns about implementation. Likewise, Lee, Yeung, Tracey, and Barker (2015) found preschool teachers in Hongkong were moderately positive towards inclusive education, but they were hesitant to support children with some types of disabilities (e.g., intellectual disability, sensory impairment). Agbenyega and Klibthong (2014) also found in a mixed-method study that Thai early childhood teachers (n=175) were frustrated as they were not prepared or trained to teach in inclusive settings. They have little

knowledge of inclusive practice in ECE. Their study also found that teachers have negative attitudes towards teaching children with sensory disabilities and autism, compared to other disabilities.

While some studies examined ECE teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education, some studies tried to understand how we can prepare teachers for inclusive ECE programs. Silverman, Hong, and Trepanier-Street (2010) analysed early childhood pre-service teachers' reflections based on their practice in an inclusive setting. The study found the pre-service teachers gained a positive image of inclusive practice through participation and collaboration in inclusive settings. Realising the importance of practical experience with children with disabilities, Recchia and Puig (2011) organised practice teaching for pre-service ECE special educators both in general and special settings. They analysed pre-service teachers' experiences through their practicum journals. They argued that in special settings pre-service teachers got the opportunity to work with children with severe disabilities and to get access to work directly with the interdisciplinary team.

Similarly, Cologon (2012) found in a mixed-method study in Australia that pre-service ECE teachers' practical engagement in an inclusive education course increased pre-service teachers' confidence about inclusive practice. Miller (2012) also found engagement in a course (motor development) with a practicum component was effective to develop pre-service teachers' awareness about the importance of physical education, about diverse abilities of children and to improve their self-confidence towards inclusive physical education. Bruder, Dunst, Wilson, and Stayton (2013) examined the perceived efficacy of pre-service special education professionals (n=1668). They recommended a shift from traditional short in-service training to in-depth practice-based training to prepare educators. Professional development of educators was

identified as a significant factor for inclusion by parents and professionals (Hu, Roberts, Wang, & Zhao, 2011; Hurley & Horn, 2010).

Additionally, some researchers focused on teachers' perspectives on particular disabilities or particular special needs. Creating the backdrop with the significance of emotional needs regarding participation, Lilian, Odundo, and Ngaruiya (2015) claimed that most ECE teachers in their study were aware of the emotional needs of children with learning disabilities. Still, in practice, it was not fully addressed. The researchers uncovered that diverse needs of children with learning needs create challenges for teachers, and more training is needed for teachers to deal with the challenges. In another study, Barned, Knapp, and Neuharth-Pritchett (2011) found pre-service ECE teachers had limited knowledge about ASD. Moreover, the basis of their acquaintance is just common experiences and movies rather than an academic course-based knowledge. Moreover, the main concerns of the pre-service teachers about the inclusion of children with ASD were disruption in the classroom, loss of control, and aggressive behaviour of children with ASD.

Parents' attitudes

Hilbert (2014) surveyed parents of preschool children with disabilities (n=84) and parents of children without disabilities (n=64) in the USA to understand parents' perceptions of inclusion. Similar to other studies on teachers' perceptions, this study found parents agreed that inclusive education is a positive practice, but they showed concerns about the inclusion of children with severe disabilities and intellectual disabilities. Hilbert recommended that preschools should purposefully communicate with the parents and community to increase awareness and inclusion of children with severe disabilities. Bruder and Dunst (2015) explore parents' perspectives as consumers of intervention services for their children with disabilities. Their study indicated that

more meaningful involvement of parents in the intervention program is positively related to parents' positive appraisal of the services.

Peers' behaviour and attitudes

Children with disabilities tend to interact with adults rather than their peers and peers without disabilities try to mimic adults' interaction with children with disabilities (Hanline & Correa-Torres, 2012). Moreover, children's behaviours vary for many possible factors in their contexts, and more research is needed to explore the association between children's awareness about disabilities and their inclusion of peers with disabilities in different play and activities (Diamond & Hong, 2010). Their study found preschoolers tended to choose a typical doll in contrast to the doll in a wheelchair. However, Diamond and Hong (2010) found children tended to choose the doll in a wheelchair in different activities after a discussion on fairness and equity issues.

Therefore, it seems peers' knowledge and awareness about disabilities plays a significant role in their attitude development towards children with disabilities. For instance, Noggle and Stites (2018) explored the experiences of children without disabilities in an inclusive preschool setting in a qualitative study. They found all children had achieved social skills and positive perceptions of children with disabilities. In another qualitative study, Koller and Juan (2015) conducted a play-based interview with different play materials and props to explore young (age 3.5-8 years) children's perspectives on inclusion in Canada. They found most of the participants showed positive perceptions about disability and inclusion. However, some children in their study identified disabilities as sickness, and some also described associated health risks.

Collaboration

The collaboration of different professionals and family members is viewed importantly in the literature. Hurley and Horn (2010) found teachers and family members both valued collaboration among families, professionals, teachers, administrators for inclusive practice. Similarly, Hu et al.

(2011) examined the inclusion process in Chinese preschool settings, and identified the need for collaboration among professionals. They interviewed four special teachers and four regular teachers, and most of the participants reported that, due to the lack of knowledge and training, they feel the challenge to work with parents of children with special needs. Moreover, their findings indicate that a systematic approach is needed for effective collaboration between the special and regular teachers.

Weglarz-Ward, Santos, and Timmer (2019) pointed out that less involvement of childcare providers in early interventions for children with disabilities may act as a barrier for effective inclusion of young children with disabilities. Moreover, they recommended preparing a guideline to clarify that the role of childcare providers in the early intervention process is important, along with their training. Another study by DeVore, Miolo, and Hader (2011) detailed a process of collaboration of intervention team, preschool teacher and parents to include a child with severe disability in inclusive practice and ensured his participation and intervention both operate in a preschool setting.

Similarly, Hu et al. (2011) examined the inclusion process in Chinese preschool settings, and they identified the need for teachers' training and collaboration. They interviewed four special teachers and four regular teachers. In their study, most of the participants reported that due to the lack of knowledge and training, they feel the challenge of working with parents of children with special needs. Moreover, findings indicate that a systematic approach is needed for effective collaboration between special and regular teachers.

Transition

The transition from the preschool to primary school is very significant for children and their families. In a case study with parents, Villeneuve et al. (2013) found that they got support for the transition from preschool to primary school but felt a lack of support in primary school. The study

recommended appointing a key/focal person in primary school who can share information and work collaboratively with parents of children with special needs and the classroom teacher. In contrast, Walker et al. (2012) reported that most of the parents found their children's transition from preschool to foundation grade in primary school was easy. However, one-third of parents and half of the teachers identified the transition as challenging. Teachers felt children's lack of social skills might create challenges. It is noteworthy that this study identified mismatches between classroom resources, teachers' expectations and children competencies. As well, two studies were conducted in different contexts. While the first study was in Canada the second study was in Australia.

Social skills

Some studies focused on the social skills of children with disabilities, as many children with disabilities experience a lack of social interaction. For example, Hanline and Correa-Torres (2012) found in a qualitative study that children with severe disabilities mostly interact with adults rather than their peers in inclusive preschool settings. This study also recommended an alternative communication system for children with severe disabilities so that they can experience better social interaction in inclusive environments.

Few studies examined the impact of intervention strategies on social skills. Stanton-Chapman and Snell (2011) evaluated the impact of social communication intervention on ten preschool children. The result indicated that after the intervention children's interactions with peers increased and their solitary play decreased. They argued that turn-taking skills might improve social interactions among children. However, this study pulled out participants from natural settings in order to conduct the research. In another experimental design study (n=12), Stanton-Chapman and Brown (2015) found that social communication intervention increased parallel play behaviours among children (3 years old) with significant language delay.

Similarly, Harjusola-Webb, Hubbell, and Bedesem (2012) presented a case with an intervention to improve the social skills of a child with autism. This study used peer-mediated intervention and social narrative to develop turn-taking skill in conversation. Harjusola-Webb et al. (2012) argued that these strategies are appropriate for the initiatives in the natural environment of the child and may improve children's functional skills in an everyday context. Another study used social role-play as an intervention method. Ganz and Flores (2010) presented cases where preschool teachers formed inclusive playgroups and initiated social role-play. During the play, teachers provided visual cues for both peers without disabilities and the child with ASD. After a few regular sessions, the children with ASD started to communicate more. They anticipated that this method would benefit children with ASD as well as children without disabilities.

It is important to note that the focuses of studies in inclusive early childhood education are scattered in many areas. However, studies are broadly concentrated to explore the perspectives of different stakeholders, mainly teachers' perspectives, as well as their professional development. A handful of studies aimed to investigate the practice and the participation of children with disabilities. Many of those studies were intervention-oriented and aimed to examine the credibility and effectiveness of particular intervention strategies. Therefore, a gap can be identified in literature in the need to explore inclusive practice as a holistic process of participation of children with disabilities in relation to the preschool practice. The next section presents studies which aimed to investigate the participation of children with disabilities in relation to practice.

Cultural-historical research on disability and inclusion

The present study draws upon cultural-historical theory. Therefore, in this section a review of those studies undertaken from this theoretical orientation towards disability and inclusion is presented.

Compared with previous studies reviewed in the section above, only a handful of studies have been conducted on inclusive education using cultural-historical theory.

Bøttcher (2011) observed two focus children with Cerebral Palsy (CP) in two different settings, a special school and a mainstream school in Denmark. This study found that explicit need-based support can help children with cerebral palsy to overcome cognitive impairment and improve their cognitive skills in practice. One of the focus children's special needs were supported in academic lessons by the educators as well as by the peers, which created opportunities for her engagement in learning activities and social activities. In contrast, another focus child with CP, in the same study, was experiencing incongruences between his competence and social demands both in academic and social settings and did not receive appropriate support. His passive participation and withdrawal extended and worsened his biological cognitive impairment. This study has been conducted in a school context and exclusively on participation of children with cerebral palsy.

Similarly, Højholt (2011) observed two focus children's participation in another study, in which both participants attended a special class and a regular class as part of their school education. Højholt (2011) argued that children participate in a situated context in relation to others. This study found an organisational gap between special help and regular practices. Both practices were focused on receiving tasks based on the individual description of the children without the insight of interplay between the children and their complex life situations. Therefore, it is important to explore how children with disabilities are understood in different institutional contexts.

Considering the importance of children's perspectives, Bøttcher (2012) explored the participation of a child with Cerebral Palsy (CP) in a special school in Denmark. Using cultural-historical theory, she discussed how a child's motive influences participation in any activity and thereby influences cognitive development. Bøttcher (2012) found that the lessons were more repetitive and children's progress was negligible. In the practice, physical training and literacy or

numeracy activities were brought together, which can also restrict children's full engagement in literacy and numeracy activities. Moreover, the child's perspective or motive in activities are ignored, but those are crucial for child development. Such study, should be also carried out in mainstream settings, especially in preschools.

In another study, a child with cerebral palsy was observed and video recorded both in-home and special school practices. In this study, Bøttcher and Dammeyer (2012) investigated how the disability occurs for a child with biological impairment in connection to his biological difference and his abilities and interactions in the two different settings of home and school. It found that in school, the teacher missed the focus child's unique visual and motor co-ordination ability and thus missed the opportunity to create a supportive condition. However, the mother of the focus child understood the unique visual and motor co-ordination and the mother and the child co-created a condition where the focus child successfully used the Rolltalk device to communicate. This study also explored participation of a child with disability enrolled in a special school. However, the study is significant as it outlined two different relationships of the child within a special school environment and a home environment and how the different relationships resulted in two kinds of conditions for the child's participation.

Another study by Andersen, Bøttcher, and Dammeyer (2017) explored parents' perspectives on home Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) training, and researchers interviewed two mothers of children with ASD in Denmark. The study found that the social structure with fewer developmental possibilities alarmed the parents of children with ASD. On the one hand the home ABA training provided parents with a sense of control in relation to creating developmental possibilities for their children. On the other hand, it created helplessness among parents as they predicted that their child might not receive the appropriate support in the

school, which parents are ensuring at home. Therefore, researchers recommended reform of all institutional practices to ensure developmental possibilities for children with disabilities.

Parents' involvement in creating possibilities for their children with disabilities also fosters changes in other institutions. For instance, Bøttcher (2018a) described how parents' vision of future possibilities for their children with severe disabilities shaped the activity and their social participation. She found that participant parents imagined future possibilities for their children's social participation and took a leading role to negotiate authorities to create new opportunities for their children. Bøttcher (2018a) argued that being a parent of a child with severe disability requires a particular kind of moral imagination, as they need to analyse limited opportunities available in the society for their children with disabilities. However, she continued that some parents created ground-breaking opportunities for their children beyond the existing facilities.

A limited number of studies used cultural historical understanding of disability and the inclusion in English literature. However, most of the studies were conducted on school-aged children. The studies mentioned above were conducted in a Danish school context but not in preschools. Walker and Berthelsen (2008) explored the inclusion of children with ASD in early childhood education programs in Australia using broader social constructivist theory and Vygotsky's (1987) concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This study found that children with ASD, as a group, had significantly less social engagement than their peers. However, this study found differences among individual children with ASD and suggested educators need to plan in relation to the individual child's need rather than using a diagnosis and label-oriented plan. However, Walker and Berthelsen (2008) specifically examined social interaction of children with ASD in free play sessions only, rather than examining holistic

inclusive practice in preschools. Moreover, the researchers missed the opportunity to use Vygotsky's (1993) theoretical conception and ideas about disability and inclusion.

In Australia, Fleer and March embraced Vygotsky's cultural-historical understanding of disability and inclusion in their studies. Fleer (2013) used video observation and video interview method to capture participation of a child with visual impairment at home and at preschool in Australia. The study found a family's everyday practice with a digital device (iPad) worked regarding the visual needs of a child with visual impairment and the use of iPad created learning and development opportunities for the child by affirming his abilities. Fleer and March (2015) found an inclusive routine, inclusive interaction, the opportunity for scientific imagination for children with visual impairment, modelling of a scientific concept, and home-school collaboration all helped the preschooler with visual impairment to learn a scientific concept through inclusive collective practice. However, Fleer and March (2015) actively created supportive social and material conditions based on a cultural-historical conception of inclusion as an intervention in their study. Therefore, their study did not aim to explore the existing preschool practice in Australia in relation to inclusive participation of children with disabilities. Based on the review, this study addressed the gap in the literature and aimed to explore existing practice and participation of children with disabilities in Australian preschools.

It is found that the above-mentioned studies commonly used video observation method to capture children's participation in the natural setting. As these studies were framed by the same theoretical view, children's disabilities had been understood in relation to the practice and children's active participation was taken into consideration to analyse their developmental possibilities. Cultural-historical researchers examined the incongruences between the children's biological differences and the social practices where the children are intended to participate. According to Vygotsky (1993), the incongruences between children's biological difference and

social practices creates secondary disabilities which are the main barriers for children's full participation and development (see Chapter 3). Moreover, cultural-historical studies captured the child's participation in multiple institutions (e.g., family, preschool, school) as children participate in different institutions and their experience in one institution influences experiences in another. However, most of the studies grounded in cultural-historical theory were conducted on school-aged children and their families in a Danish context. Very few studies have been undertaken in an Australian context to explore participation of children with disabilities in preschool practices.

Conclusion

In summary, from the above review, it is evident that despite the fact that there has been less research into the participation of children with disabilities in preschools, existing studies are scattered in various research topics. First, when the literature on children's participation is brought together, it is found that studies concentrated on participation measurement of children with disabilities, and on finding activity types where children with disabilities participate most. Despite adding valuable knowledge in the literature, these studies did not inform about the nature and process of participation. Black-Hawkins and colleagues explored the nature and process of participation of children with disabilities. However, their studies had been done in primary and secondary school contexts. Therefore, there is a gap in the literature which indicates studies are needed to investigate the nature and process of participation of children with disabilities in early childhood education.

Second, drawing upon the literature on inclusive education in early childhood education it is determined that studies paid most attention to revealing different stakeholders' (e.g., teacher, parent, peer) perspectives on inclusion of children with disabilities and teachers' professional development. Other studies investigate social skills of children with disabilities and strategies to

support their social skills development. Altogether, these studies informed about various contextual issues regarding inclusion (e.g., teachers feel they are not sufficiently prepared to support children with severe disabilities) but not the holistic participation of children with disabilities. Even these study findings are indicating the importance of knowing what's happening in an inclusive setting. If teachers are not adequately prepared, then how can they support inclusion of children with disabilities? How are the children with disabilities participating in an inclusive practice? Therefore, this study aimed to address such questions and to contribute to the literature gap.

Third, the review indicates that researchers who followed cultural-historical theory as their analytical lens, viewed a child's participation in relation to the particular environment, as well as in relation to broader social value positions. Moreover, they followed a cultural-historical methodological stance to understand a child's participation in the everyday context. Bøttcher and her colleagues and Fleer's research showed evidence that if educators and other caregivers understand the child's development trajectory and plan participation opportunities accordingly, the child can overcome her/his biological impairment. Bøttcher and her colleagues mostly investigated participation of children with disabilities in special school settings in Denmark. However, Fleer conducted her study in mainstream early childhood settings in Australia to investigate science learning possibilities for a child with visual impairment. Therefore, Fleer's study did not focus on holistic participation of the participant child but investigated holistic science learning possibilities in an inclusive preschool setting.

At this departure point, I aim to explore the participation of children with disabilities in mainstream preschools in Australia using cultural-historical theory. Based on the existing knowledge and identified gaps in the literature, the following research questions are generated to answer through this study:

1. How do the Australian mainstream preschool practices create conditions for children with disabilities to participate in preschool activities?
2. How do children with disabilities create their individual pathways for participation in the Australian mainstream preschool activities?
3. What are the potential enablers and barriers for the inclusion of children with disabilities in Australian mainstream preschools?

The next chapter explains why I have chosen cultural-historical theory, what cultural-historical theory is and how this theory is relevant to my study.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

Introduction

The previous two chapters presented the historical trajectory of education opportunities and practices for children with disabilities. Moreover, inclusive education is a contemporary approach in education, and professionals are still trying to grasp its philosophical foundation and digging deeper for its appropriate implications. Therefore, this study on inclusive practice for children with disabilities demands a robust theoretical basis which will take into consideration the historical basis and everyday practices of inclusion and understand the participation of children with disabilities holistically. This study is informed by cultural-historical theory to frame the research towards an exploration of the participation of children with disabilities in mainstream preschools. This chapter first presents different lenses on disabilities to explain why cultural-historical theory is the most powerful fit as a framework for this research. Then, this chapter presents the cultural-historical view on disability and inclusion, followed by a general overview of cultural-historical theory and child development.

Different lenses on disability

Disability has been understood through different lenses, and the substantially different understandings result in different implications for education policy and practices. Most commonly, disability is viewed through the medical model and the social model (Bøttcher & Dammeyer, 2016). The World Health Organization's (WHO, 2001) International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) is also used to interpret disability.

The medical model explains a disability as the consequence of a person's biological problems or impairments. It focuses on an individual's limitations and promotes welfare for individuals with disabilities (Allan, Brown, & Riddell, 1998). This model reduced the disability

to defect, disorder, diagnosis, classification, cure, medicine, psychology etc. Valle and Connor (2011) explained very explicitly how the medical model defines disability and prescribes services for individuals with disabilities with the example of The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):

> The "patient" (student) presents with "symptoms" (educational problems). The "scientific expert" (school psychologist) performs an "examination" (psycho-educational assessment) in order to confirm or rule out a "diagnosis" (disability). Once a "diagnosis" (disability) is identified, a "prescription" (Individual Education Plan or IEP) is written with recommendations for a "course of treatment" (special education placement and individualized instruction) intended to "cure" (remediate) the "patient" (student). (pp. 40-41).

In response to the critique of the medical model, the social model of disability emerged from the disability rights movement of Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation [UPIAS] in the mid-1970s (Durell, 2014; Oliver, 2013; Samaha, 2007). Later Finkelstein and Oliver's efforts during the 1980s and 1990s established the social model in academia (Shakespeare & Watson, 1997). UPIAS (1976) raised voice in the "Fundamental Principles of Disability" as follows-

> In our view, it is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments; by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. Disabled people are therefore an oppressed group in society. It follows from this analysis that having low incomes, for example, is only one aspect of our oppression. It is a consequence of our isolation and segregation, in every area of life, such as education, work, mobility, housing, etc. (p.3-4, original)

The social model views that disability does not occur for the biological reason but "it is a consequence of social oppression" (Oliver, 1996, p. 35). Therefore, the cause of disability is not located in the body, rather it is located in the society. The model focuses on the "discriminatory attitude, cultures, policies and institutional practices" (Booth & Ainscow, 2002, p. 6) of society where the majority (people without disabilities) have thought about their facilities only. It criticises the normalisation process of people with disabilities and argues that society needs to be changed rather than the individual with disabilities (Oliver, 1996, p. 37). Thus, the social model

inspires changes in policy and practices to eradicate discriminatory social, as well as environmental, structures. According to Oliver (2013),

> [The social model] became the vehicle for developing a collective disability consciousness and helped to develop and strengthen the disabled peoples' movement that had begun to emerge a decade earlier. Armed with the idea that we needed to identify and eradicate the disabling barriers we had in common, the disabled peoples' movement forced the media to change their images of us, transport providers to open up many of their services to us, public buildings to become much more accessible and the legal system changed to make it illegal to discriminate against us. (p. 1024-1025)

The social model of disability is criticised for its limitation in ignoring the biological or health issue of individuals of disabilities. However, Oliver explained the difference between illness and disability of an individual with disabilities (see Oliver, 1996). It has been pointed out that the physical and psychological pains of an individual with disabilities are overlooked in the social model. Shakespeare and Watson (2001) criticised the rigid implications of the social model by some British activists and said, "Most activists concede that behind closed doors they talk about aches and pains and urinary tract infections, even while they deny any relevance of the body while they are out campaigning" (p. 12)

The social model is also criticised for its failure to explain disability completely. Samaha (2007) questioned whether social model gave any broad definition of disability. Oliver (1996) argued that the social model of disability "is not a social theory of disability" to "explain disability in totality" (p. 41). Shakespeare and Watson (2001) emphasised that disability should neither be viewed as medical condition nor as a result of social obstacles only (p. 23). The medical model is governing policies and practices despite its criticism in literature. According to Bøttcher (2012), the use of classification in identifying the disability, providing intervention, and resource allocation may create a strong position for the medical model in special education. For example, the International Classification of Impairment, Disability and handicapped (ICIDH) and ICF of WHO were developed in an association of medical model (Durell, 2014).

The revision of the ICIDH, published in 1980, produced the ICF in 2001 (WHO, 2001). In ICF, the term “handicap” is omitted for its negative connotations and disability is used as an umbrella term, which is understood through its components as impairment, activity limitation and participation restriction (WHO, 2001). In this classification, the environmental (physical, social and attitudinal) factors were also valued significantly. WHO (2001) claimed that both the medical model and social model had been integrated into ICF**.** However, ICF is criticised for its connection with the medical model (Durell, 2014).

While the medical model has emphasised the deficits of persons with disabilities, the social model has emphasised the social barriers for persons with disabilities. However, none of these models has directly emphasised the process of their development and learning. Therefore, in special education or inclusive education research, a vacuum of strong theoretical basis is notable. A few studies used theories from psychology, post-colonial theory, Social theory of Pierre Bourdieu, Amartya Sen’s capability approach (e.g., Agbenyega, 2017; Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2011; Dalkilic & Vadeboncoeur, 2016; Reindal, 2010). Most of these theories mainly explain the dynamics of broader society but not disability and development. However, I believe the vacuum of theoretical bases in education and special education prompt researchers to use social, political theory to explain disability and inclusive education. In my opinion, researchers choose and use this social, political theory in sophisticated ways to explain problems in education rather than the narrow medical and social model of disability.

Although Vygotsky’s cultural-historical theory explained disability and development at the beginning of the 20th century, it remains relevant today. Interestingly, Vygotsky critiqued the biomedical view of disability and emphasised social justice in education before the social model evolved. Vygotsky’s cultural-historical theory uniquely emphasised the process of the development of an individual with disability in relation to the historical and cultural practice of

the society rather than divorcing biological difference and social barriers from each other. Consequently, I preferred to use cultural-historical theory, as it explains disabilities in conjunction with child development, and education which are directly relevant to the research problem guiding my research. Moreover, the cultural-historical theory embraces social dynamics significantly in the process of development and education, which was overlooked in many developmental theories. The next section presents the cultural-historical conception of disability and inclusion.

Cultural-Historical conception of disability and inclusion

Volume 2 of The Collected Works of L. S. Vygotsky compiled Vygotsky's writing on disability and special education between 1924 -1931. This section is a theoretical discussion of Vygotsky's thought on disability and special education. Vygotsky's critical stand towards contemporary western psychology helped him to theorise child development from a new angle. Vygotsky strongly criticised the practice of arithmetical calculation of child's weaknesses to decide his / her placement in schools. He stated that a child is full of potential at any given moment. If we need to measure, we need to measure the strengths of a child rather than the weaknesses. Vygotsky rejected the quantitative assessment and advocated for qualitative evaluation to understand the child as a whole.

Vygotsky's concepts and arguments on primary and secondary disability, alternative route of development and compensation, and inclusion are discussed in turn.

Primary disability and secondary disability

While both the medical and social model of disability failed to capture the holistic aspect of disability, Vygotsky dealt with this problem. Vygotsky (1993) explained disabilities in two ways – primary disability and secondary disability. Primary disability refers to the biological difference

or impairment, and secondary disability refers to the social consequences a child experiences because of her/his biological difference (see Figure 3.5).

Vygotsky (1993) argued that the biological impairment is not a problem for a child with visual impairment as the impairment is a normal condition for the child until the impairment is socially conditioned as a misfortune to the child. Thus, the social relations the child experiences because of his/her biological difference cause the secondary disability, which hinders the development of such a child. According to Vygotsky, children with disabilities are socially conditioned in two ways-

> The social effect of the defect (the inferiority complex) is one side of the social conditioning. The other side is the social pressure on the child to adapt to those circumstances created and compounded for the normal human type.
>
> (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 36)

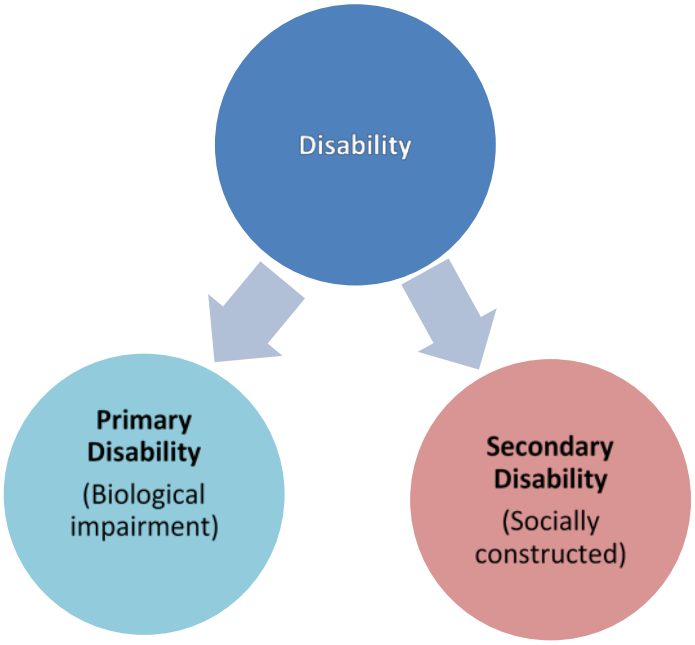

Figure 3.5: Two different states of disability (Vygotsky, 1993)

At this point, the question arises in relation to how a society creates secondary disabilities. Vygotsky argued that a child with visual impairment does not feel unfortunate in his/her biological

shortcoming, as blindness is a normal condition for the child. The child cannot perceive her/his uniqueness and misfortune directly but only secondarily as a consequence of his/her social experience. The child's biological shortcomings even change the relationship with others. For example, a child with visual impairment when perceived negatively in the family and a child with visual impairment who enjoyed much attention and sympathy because of their visual impairment, both of them brought up exclusively in the family – an invisible separation from others. Both the negligence and sympathy construct their inferiority complex.

Furthermore, Vygotsky (1993) explained how interactions and participation of human beings in the world are mediated through different psychological and cultural tools and signs (e.g., language, cultural artefacts). Most of our cultural signs and tools are typically developed in relation to considerations about the convenience and practicality of the majority of people. If the society places the same demand to use the same cultural tools on the child who is biologically different from the majority, an incongruence occurs between the child's biological difference and the social demand. Such incongruence causes a secondary disability for the child.

For example, if a child with hearing impairment lives with parents with hearing impairment, the child will not face any barriers to participate in the family (Bøttcher & Dammeyer, 2016). As a child without hearing impairment learns to speak her/his mother tongue, this child with hearing impairment learns sign language through his or her interactions with parents with hearing impairment. However, the social demand outside the child's family will be different where using verbal communication is the usual demand for a child after a certain age. Such social demand for using spoken language creates incongruence between the child's psychological ability and the social demand – thus creating secondary disability for the child with hearing impairment.

Vygotsky (1993) recommended developing and using special cultural tools and signs (e.g., Braille, finger-spelling, sign language) for children with disabilities so that they can process the world in their unique way using those tools and signs. However, society mostly plays a very passive role in providing and promoting alternative means and tools for children with disabilities. Instead, society expects that the child will use the same cultural tools and signs to reach developmental goals. Thus, society creates barriers for children with disabilities and triggers secondary disabilities and sometimes defines the socially constructed disability as the child's lack of ability.

Alternative (roundabout) route of development and compensation

Naturally, a child with disabilities has a motive to compensate for the biological problem. For example, a child with visual impairment has a strong desire to see everything, and a child with a speech problem has a strong desire to talk. Touch and hearing can replace the loss of sight as a healthy kidney can take over the function of the damaged one. However, Vygotsky argued that such over-compensation for sight or hearing loss is not as natural as how a healthy kidney compensates for the damaged one. For successful compensation, we need to use the compensatory psychological drive of the child, need to raise social demand and social expectation, and need to educate them as we do for the typical child. Vygotsky criticised the social practice of low expectation for children with disabilities. He mentioned simple life skills development and teaching low grade vocational skill as low social expectations. Vygotsky stated that understanding the unique psychological structure of a child with disability when we educate them for full participation as a social member would be social compensation. To make the compensation successful, we need to lead the child with disabilities towards his/her unique path of development.

> From a pedagogical point of view, a blind [sic] child or deaf child may, in principle, be equated with a normal child, but the deaf or blind child achieves the goals of a normal child by different means and by a different path. It is also particularly important

> for the educator to know precisely the uniqueness of the path on which he must lead the child….
>
> (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 60)

Though the means of development is different for children with disabilities, the fundamental laws of development are the same for both typical children and children with disabilities. The fundamental rules for psychological development are the same for children with disabilities and children without disabilities. An example of a metaphor may help to understand that the basic rules of development can be similar, even when the path of development is different for children with disabilities. Assume that you are driving a car on X route to reach place A (see Figure 3.6); that is your goal. However, in the middle of your journey, you find the road is closed for an emergency.

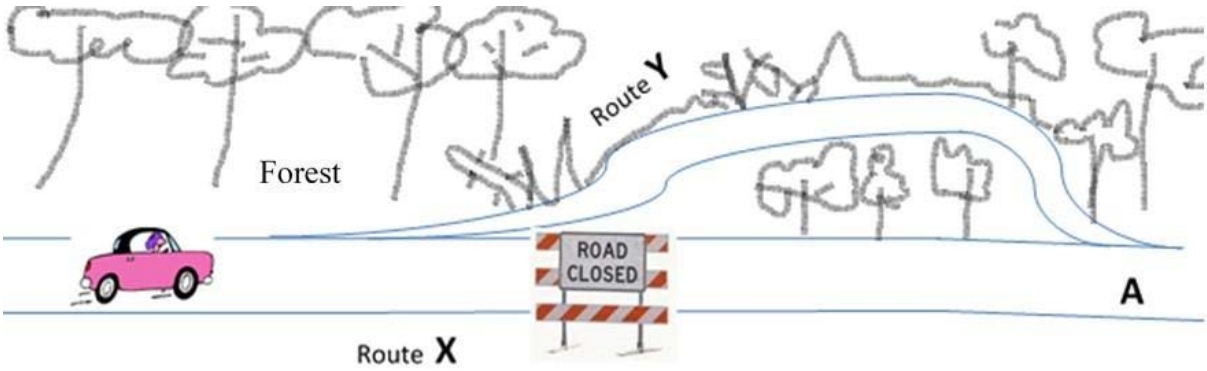

Figure 3.6: Alternative route to reach same social goal

You are informed that there is a rocky path through the forest. You decide to choose alternative route Y to reach your goal A, although the road is not as smooth as usual route X. You took a different path, but you are driving your car using almost the same rules as you did on X route. Similarly, the process of reading braille dots by a blind child is analogous to the process of visual text reading by a typical child; there is no fundamental difference regarding psychological aspects.

Here I would like to use this metaphor to explain Vygotsky's criticism about education for children with disabilities. Vygotsky argued that existing education practices are reluctant to look for an alternative route for children with disabilities. Instead, educators wait on X route (the

traditional or typical way to reach goal A) and try to fix the child. If the problem is solved, then they can start the educational journey for children with disabilities. For example, Vygotsky mentioned how cruelly educators train students with hearing impairments to acquire oral speech. The educators first try to solve the biological defect of the children with disabilities to make them like typical children and to educate them accordingly – Vygotsky addressed this phenomenon as "biological compensation" (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 67). Thus, they spent most of the time trying to solve the impairment instead of using remaining health and psychological strength to educate them. It was very surprising to Vygotsky that,

> Why until now special education has been spent 90 percent of its time on the children's illness and not on their health.
>
> (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 80)

Vygotsky pointed out that the biological problem is a very tiny issue if we compare it with the child's general health. For example, a blind child does not have vision but other than that he is physically and psychologically a healthy child. Therefore, their development as a fully productive human being is not impossible. Considering this, Vygotsky emphasised social compensation rather than the biological type. In his words, "In place of biological compensation, the idea of social compensation must be advanced" (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 84). We need to help the child to know the world and to lead a full social life. He argued that existing special education failed to do that, and instead, tries to make the world narrower for children with disabilities. Vygotsky argued that the medical or therapeutic pedagogy grasp the whole curriculum of special education, where general educational goals are almost totally ignored. According to Vygotsky, "any special medicinal diet prescribed for a handicapped [sic] child must not undermine his overall normal diet" (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 82).

Same educational goal and inclusion

Vygotsky criticised educators for not setting the same educational goals for children with disabilities as they do for their peers. According to Vygotsky, when someone's development is obstructed by biological impairment, it does not mean that the child is less developed – but it means the child is just developed differently. The physiological impairment may cause an obstacle for broader development. Still, this may also direct efforts towards a new path of development as compensation, which we need to understand correctly to re-direct the development of children with disabilities. Because of the impairment, children with disabilities face difficulties on the traditional route (X), which is planned or constructed considering children without disabilities (see Figure 3.6). However, they are also capable of reaching the same educational goals as typical children through an alternative path (Y) which is designed addressing the unique needs of the child with disabilities. Vygotsky suggested valuing the strengths of a child with disabilities rather than over-emphasising their biological impairment.

Therefore, Vygotsky argued for the same general educational goals for children with disabilities as their typical peers. Vygotsky criticised how we only point out the weaknesses of a child with disabilities and schools try to conform to the problems rather than fighting against them. For example, he mentioned that we use too many visual materials for children with intellectual disabilities who depend on concrete experience and struggle with abstract understanding. Thus, schools address their problems and destroy their opportunity to learn abstract thinking. In Vygotsky's words:

> … the school must free itself from the abundant use of visual aids, which serve as an obstacle to the development of abstract thought. In other words, a school must not only adapt to the disabilities of such a child but also must fight these disabilities and overcome them.
>
> (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 50)

Vygotsky emphasised three aspects to understand the problem of cultural development of children with disabilities:

> i) The degree of primitivism [under development] in the childhood mind
> ii) The nature of his adoption of cultural and psychological tools
> iii) The means by which he makes use of his own psychological functions
>
> (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 45)

Vygotsky suggested creating special cultural tools so that children with disabilities can use those tools to access culture. If children with disabilities can access culture, they can overcome under-development. Mastering the culture is essential for the cultural development of any child. Vygotsky (1993) argued as follows that a child with disability has the ability to use cultural and psychological tools. A child with disability can access the culture by using special cultural tools or through special pedagogy.

> … because the most important and decisive condition of cultural development - precisely the ability to use psychological tools - is preserved in such children [children with disabilities].
>
> (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 47)

Vygotsky criticised the segregation process of special education. Such segregation deprives children with disabilities from leading a typical life. He emphasised that a child with visual impairment must need to play with seeing children. In his opinion, while it is crucial to rescue the children with disabilities from their isolated world, special schools have tendencies to develop their isolation to a greater level. Vygotsky (1993) interpreted a German university's special segregated higher education arrangement for students with visual impairments at his time as a process of maximum isolation. He argued that such institutions provide education as a *social charity*, but education should be provided as *social education*. Vygotsky dreamt of solving the problem of social segregation of individuals with disabilities. In his words:

> We must find a system which would successfully coordinate special education with normal education. … special skills and training must be subordinated to general

> education, to general training. Special education must merge with the overall child activity.
>
> (Vygotsky, 1993, pp. 65, 70)

Vygotsky was indicating a total shift in rethinking special education, for which the base is the same educational goal as for typical children. He argued that a blind child does not need to see letters, but they need to read and write as children without disabilities do. Thus, Vygotsky's view supports the inclusion of children with disabilities as he opposes the segregation of these children from society and suggests counting them as fully productive members of the community.

This study will investigate how mainstream preschool practice supports the participation of children with disabilities using the concepts of cultural-historical theory on disability. How the preschool practice and children themselves are finding and directing the journey through alternative ways. Therefore, it can be said that the **participation** of children with disabilities will be analysed from a different angle – based on cultural-historical theory.

Cultural-historical theory also guides the methodology of a study at the same time as it provides theoretical concepts. In contrast, the social model and medical model give us concepts only. Cultural-historical theory is significant for a researcher as not only a theoretical tool for analysis but also as an appropriate methodology (Veresov, 2014). In this study, Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory will be used as a theoretical and methodological framework. Moreover, Vygotsky (1993) claimed the developmental law for children with disabilities and children without disabilities is the same. Therefore, the next section presents a general overview of the cultural-historical theory.

Cultural-historical theory: An overview

Vygotsky first coined the importance of social interaction and cultural context in relation to the development of the human mind. He introduced cultural-historical theory to conceptualise

children's development. Within his short life period (37 years), his efforts created a classic cultural-historical theory which introduced human development and psychology from an entirely different angle than the traditional view.

The general law of development

The main goal of cultural-historical theory was understanding the mental development of the human being. In particular, understanding the higher mental functions of a human being, which constitute the difference between human and animal. According to Veresov (2010), "Cultural historical theory was the theory of the origin and development of higher mental functions" (p. 83). The difference between higher mental functions and lower mental functions is important to understand the difference between the development of human beings and animals. Lower mental functions (sensation, reflexes, representations, etc.) are observed both in humans' and animals' behaviours. However, higher mental functions (voluntary attention, abstract thinking, logical memory, etc.) are unique characteristics of human beings among all creatures. The origin of lower mental functions is biological or natural, but the origin of higher mental functions is social or cultural. Therefore, the development of the human mind is not biological but social and cultural. The social environment is not only a factor which influences development, but also it is the main source of development.

> The social environment *is the source* for the appearance of all specific human properties of the personality gradually acquired by the child or the source of social development of the child...
>
> (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 203)

How can the human mind be social or cultural? How do higher mental functions develop? Before it was anticipated that higher mental functions already exist in individual in a ready, semi-ready, or basic form and through social interaction, those unfold, develop or transform into their complex form. Vygotsky first claimed that the process is just the other way around. Every higher mental

function exists as a social relation, and later it transforms into a mental function of an individual. According to Vygotsky (1997),

> Every higher mental function necessarily passes through an external stage of development because function is primarily social. … Every higher mental function was external because it was social before it became an internal, strictly mental function; it was formerly a social relation of two people. (p. 105).

Therefore, our higher mental function is social or cultural by nature and by development, which is the general law of development. The development of children with disabilities also occurs following the general law of development. If children with disabilities are in social relations that support their activities, then development is expected to occur. Otherwise, the lack of social interaction is likely to create secondary disabilities (see page 52) for them and hinder their development of higher mental functions. How does this development occur? In this regard, Vygotsky mentioned the use of cultural tools and mediation processes for supporting children's development.

Cultural tools and mediation

We make tools, values, and customs for serving our group needs, and these are later used to define us and to link us to each other (Smidt, 2009). We use cultural tools to communicate with each other in society, and such communication brings qualitative changes in our thought. In every culture, people develop their cultural tools, and those are used to make meaning of the world. The cultural tools are external, and we use these tools in our internal mediating activity (Veresov, 2010). Thus, the cultural tools become internal psychological tools in mediating activity. A handkerchief does not have any relevance with counting, but we are using this external tool by tying knots to help us to count, in an internal cognitive process. Cultural tools "sometimes referred to as psychological tools; these are the objects and signs and systems developed by human beings over time and within communities to assist thinking." (Smidt, 2009, p. 18). With regard to signs and systems, Vygotsky mentioned the technique of tying a knot to count or remember, counting

finger, map, art, language, symbols and many other examples of signs and systems (Kozulin, 2003). For instance, Vygotsky gave an example of counting, showing seven apples to a child and asking if the child took two apples, how many apples would be left. In Vygotsky's words

> To solve the problem, he [sic] moves from the apples to his fingers. In this case, the fingers play the role of signs. He puts out seven fingers, then subtracts two, leaving five.
>
> (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 118)

Therefore, cultural tools (artefacts, sign and symbols, objects) help us in the mediation process. Mediation is one of the key concepts of cultural-historical theory (Kozulin, 2003; Veresov, 2010). Our communication, learning and development happen through the process of mediation (see Figure 3.7). For example, after watching a certain movie, my thoughts about formal education and achievement changed, as the movie helped me to think differently. This movie captures some everyday practices of formal education system and links those practices with critical questions. A movie is a cultural tool, which helped me to develop a critical point of view on formal education and achievement.

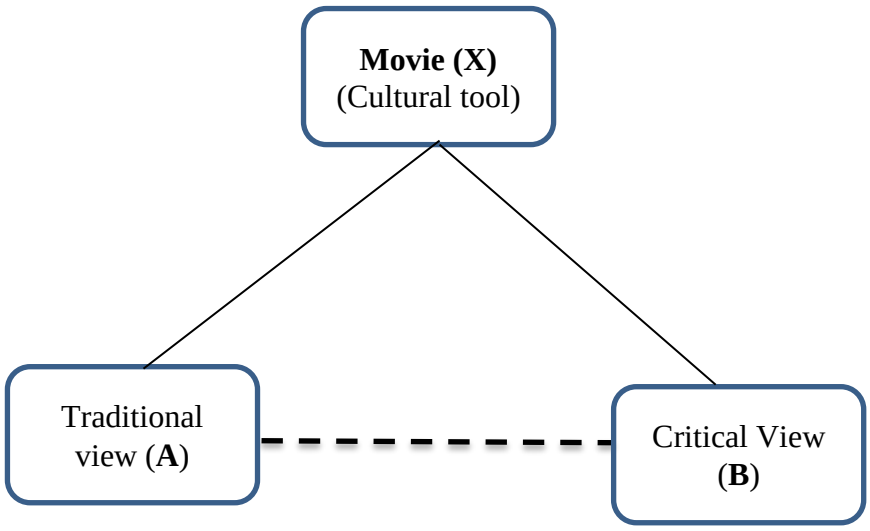

Figure 3.7: The process of mediation; adapted from (Vygotsky, 1994a)

The change of A towards B is not direct, but it is a complex change which is mediated through the cultural tool (here a movie). The relation between AX and BX helps to transform A towards B.

Our interaction with the world is indirect and mediated by cultural or psychological tools (Wertsch, 2007). Similarly, a child's understanding about the world is mediating through his/her interaction with others, and such communication happens through using cultural tools, which are also culturally developed and carry meanings and communicate about our culture. As the developmental law is same for children with disabilities, they also need psychological tools or cultural tools for social interactions, as development is also a mediated process for them.

Development as a process and qualitative change

Vygotsky (1998) viewed development as a complex process of reorganisation – a qualitative change, rather than a sum of quantitative changes. He criticised the trend of quantitative measurement of a child's intellectual ability through standardised tests. He argued that such tests just measure matured development, but he emphasised understanding the process of development.

> …[Development] is not confined to the scheme "more-less," but is characterized primarily and specifically by the presence of qualitative neoformations that are subject to their own rhythm and require a special measure each time.
>
> (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 189).

Thus, Vygotsky reconstructed the idea of the development as the process of qualitative new formation. He mentioned that traditionally we only consider one aspect of development – the result of development or "fruits of development" (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 200) – rather than the process of development. Vygotsky (1987) emphasised understanding the level of development that is in the process of maturation. In order to explain the process of development and understanding a child's developmental level Vygotsky (1987) drew on the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is widely used in the literature. However, the concept of ZPD is used in literature in various ways, and sometimes ZPD is understood more narrowly than how Vygotsky actually meant (Chaiklin, 2003).

In my interpretation, the way Vygotsky conceptualised human development was very different from the practices and understanding of development at the time (and also now, as it was argued in Chapter 2). Consequently, the existing assessment tradition of child development was also criticised by Vygotsky. The Intelligence Quotient (IQ) test measures a child's development in relation to a set of normative age-appropriate scales and the child's ability is then determined by the set of questions the child correctly answered and its linkage to the normative age group. I would like to point out the scientific and objective procedure for applying the test, which decontextualized the child as well as avoiding the subjective perspective of the child.

The cultural line of human development does not appear automatically as the child attains a chronological age. Therefore, Vygotsky criticised the theoretical basis of the IQ test. Then Vygotsky criticised the validity of IQ test, as the mental age is only representing the matured mental functions but not the child's developing abilities. Vygotsky (1987) also questioned the procedure of IQ test, where the test administrator does not have any subjective inquiry to understand the child's individual abilities, which the child is not able to represent alone, but in an interaction (e.g., leading questioning, giving examples) with the administrator the child could perhaps solve more problems than his assessed mental age. The concept of ZPD can be said to be an expression of Vygotsky's criticism towards IQ test tradition as well as a guideline for what to measure and how to measure. According to Vygotsky (1987):

> The psychologist must not limit his analysis to functions that have matured. He must consider those that are in the process of maturing. If he is to fully evaluate the state of the child's development, the psychologist must consider not only the actual level of development but the zone of proximal development (p. 208-209).

Vygotsky (1998) also proved, using a hypothetical example, that similar mental age or actual level of development of two children does not mean that the mental ability of both children is equal; rather it varies widely when the children do work with assistance. This emphasised the process of development more than the result of the development. Vygotsky suggested a

qualitative inquiry to measure the maturing functions of a child. He argued what the child can do in collaboration with others indicates the child's maturing functions which are "lying in the zone of Proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 212).

Moreover, the developmental readiness is judged or measured by the score of correct answers a child gives in a standardised test and instructions are planned accordingly. For example, a teacher teaches multiplication at a specific age level when a child is developmentally ready. What is the point of teaching the abilities which are already developed? Should we not move forward from this matured level of development? According to Vygotsky (1987), it is important to know the actual development of the child, but we need to facilitate the skills which are maturing or developing; which are in their embryonic stage. Through guidance and facilitation, it will reach the endpoint of the developmental process – and will be matured.

As Vygotsky viewed child development as a complex process, he tried to develop a structure which represents the dynamic nature of development. Vygotsky (1998) found various ways of dividing childhood development into different periods in the literature, but he noticed that commonly each theory divided childhood into stages based on single criteria. For example, dentition, sexual development, language development etc. used as a single criterion in the periodisation of childhood development. However, Vygotsky (1998) criticised such partial understanding of child development, and he developed a holistic view of child development. He criticised the dualistic understanding of the child and the environment and proposed to understand child development as a unity of the child and his social reality.

Instead of chronological age-appropriate understanding of development, Vygotsky (1998) divided the developmental phases considering the crisis of childhood and related the new main formation of each phase. Instead of describing child development in standalone periods, Vygotsky (1998) explained the developmental age periods as dynamic and relational parts of the

whole. He also explained the transitional age to linking each period of development together as a whole.

Dramatic and dialectic nature of development

Cultural-historical theory explains the dramatic and dialectical nature of development. The dramatic relation is something people feel the necessity to pay attention to. For example, confusion, crisis, debate, challenge, fascinating – such dramatic features in any social relations make the relation dramatic and such relations become an intra-psychological category. "Overcoming social dramatical collisions (dramas of life) human being creates his/her unique personality" (Veresov, 2015, p. 248). Like a dramatic relationship, very often the word dialectic is used in relation to cultural-historical theory. The Greek word dialectic "refers to a controversy where there is both an argument and counter-argument…It means not accepting that one thing is true and the opposite false, but trying to see how each contributes to an understanding" (Smidt, 2009, p. 13).

Vygotsky was influenced by Hegel's and Marx's concept of dialectic, and the concept is underpinned by cultural-historical theory (Dafermos, 2015). Hegel viewed that the law of history is made up of people's journey towards their awareness about their freedom (Smidt, 2009). According to Smidt (2009), from Hegel's perspective, history is not something very linear, but it is about overcoming challenges and hurdles, making ways and alternatives, negotiation. "In order to move ahead, some obstacles have to be encountered and overcome. So history is dialectical" (Smidt, 2009, p. 13). Similarly, Vygotsky viewed the development of higher mental functions as dialectic and complex in nature. In Vygotsky's words, development is a:

> complex dialectical process that is characterised by complex periodicity, disproportion in the development of separate functions, metamorphoses or qualitative transformation of certain forms into others, a complex merging of the process of evaluation and

> involution, a complex crossing of external and internal factors, a complex process of overcoming difficulties and adapting.
>
> (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 99)

Social interactions, in which conflict or crisis or negotiation occurs to come up with a solution or better understanding, bring change in the human mind, and the reorganization of the human mind counts as development. The whole development process is complex and dialectical – the dialectic between individual and social factors. A child participates in and tries to adapt to social rules, but at the same time, the child also contributes to social practices through her/his participation.

Social Situation of Development (SSD)

Vygotsky established the concept of the social situation of development to explain the role of the environment in child development, especially in higher mental function. While his contemporary researchers were discussing the influencing factors of the environment on development, Vygotsky claimed that the influence of the environment is not straightforward in the interplay with the development of a child's higher mental function. The influence of the environment is complex and dialectic. Vygotsky argued that we need to understand the relationship between the child and the environment at a particular stage to understand the influence of the environment. (Vygotsky, 1994b, p. 338) stated,

> At the same time environment should not be regarded as a condition of development which purely objectively determines the development of a child by virtue of the fact that it contains certain qualities or features, but one should always approach environment from the point of view of the relationship which exists between the child and its environment at a given stage of his [sic] development.

The relationship between the child and his/her social reality at a particular stage of development has been discussed here. According to Vygotsky (1998), "the social situation of development is nothing other than a system of relations between the child of a given age and social reality" (p. 199). Vygotsky emphasised that the relationship between the child and the environment is

dynamic, and it is important to understand the relationship between the child and the environment for understanding the influence of the environment on child development:

> Environment cannot be regarded as static entity and one which is peripheral in relation to development, but must be seen as changeable. … the child, his development keep changing, becomes different. And it is not the child who changes, for the relationship between him and his environment also changes and the same environment now begins to have a different influence on the child. This dynamic and relative interpretation of environment is the most important source of information.
>
> (Vygotsky, 1994b, p. 344)

A child experiences the different environments at different ages, and a child also changes across different ages. A child experiences the same environment differently at different ages because of his personal development. Moreover, different children perceive or experience the same environment or social situation differently. The environment and how the child interprets it or experiences it determine the psychological characteristics of a child.

Vygotsky (1994b), gave an example of three siblings who experience violence by their intoxicated mother regularly, and this specific social situation influences their development in three different ways. The youngest child is severely horrified by this situation and developed depression and stammer. The second child developed conflicting feelings for the mother; the child was showing extreme attachment to the mother as well as extreme hate for her. The eldest child's reaction to the same social situation was different from the others. The eldest child understands the alcoholic mother as an ill mother and responds to the situation differently. His psychological development is disrupted too, but some sort of maturity is developed in the child. As the mother had a drinking problem, the eldest child took the responsibility of taking care of the whole family. He tries to calm down his mother when she becomes aggressive and to save his younger siblings from the mother's disruptive behaviour. Here the eldest child's awareness of the social situation (understanding mother is sick) and his social position (eldest among siblings) changed his relationship with the environment.

Vygotsky (1994b) argued that the environment is not only a setting where development takes place. Instead, he claimed the environment is the source of development. The social aspects which are now part of the child's entity were external to the child previously. Vygotsky argued that the child first experiences something in a social situation, and then the experience becomes a part of the child's psychological structure. For example, a child first picks up speech through social interaction with others and uses it as a means of social communication. Later the child uses the speech for his or her internal thought process.

> … man [sic] is a social creature, that without social interaction he can never develop in himself any of the attributes and characteristics which have developed as a result of the historical evolution of all humankind.
>
> (Vygotsky, 1994b, p. 348)

Thus, the environment plays a significant role in a child's development as a contributing source of development. Therefore, it is important to know children's cultural-historical and social context, in other words, their social situation of development, for understanding their development (Hedegaard, Fleer, Bang, & Hviid, 2008).

The influence of environment on child development not only depends on its characteristics but also depends on child's age level (not chronological but developmental stage), social position, emotional experience in a situation or environment, and awareness about the environment. The influence of the environment on child development depends on how the influence is refracted through the invisible personality prism of the particular child. The personality prism for each child will be different as every child experiences the same world differently through their different personal attributes. Therefore, the influence of the same environment will be refracted differently for different children and even differently for the same child at different stages of development. Thus, the same social situation is experienced differently because of the unique social situation of development of different children, and as such, it is argued that different children's relationship with the same environment will not be the

same but rather will vary. In other words, the relationship between the child and the environment depends on the social situation and the child's complex personal state, which referred to as *perezhivanie*.

Perezhivanie

"*Perezhivanie"* is a Russian word, and it is difficult to translate its meaning into English. Therefore, academics prefer to mention the Russian word in a discussion about this concept (Fleer, 2016). In the Vygotsky Reader, *perezhivanie* is used as synonymous with "emotional experience" (Vygotsky, 1994b). However, the meaning of *perezhivanie* is beyond emotional experience and as a result, the translator of the Vygotsky Reader also mentioned the original Russian word "*perezhivanie*" in parenthesis.

Vygotsky argued that usually, we emphasise the influence or role of the environment on child development without considering how the child perceives or relates to the environment (Vygotsky, 1994b). He explained that the influence of the environment or situation on the child's development is not direct, but the influence of the environment itself is also influenced by the child's characteristics (together as the SSD). Therefore, the influence of the same environment on a different child is different. Vygotsky's example of three children of an intoxicated mother is a good explanation of the fact. Thus, the influence of apparently the same environment on the same child in his different developmental stages differs, as the child has changed. As a result, Vygotsky claimed that the influence of environment is **refracted** through the child's *perezhivanie* prism rather than reflected. If the influence of the environment is reflected, the same environment would promote the same development for every child.

Vygotsky imagined the child's *perezhivanie* as a prism through which the influence of environment is refracted. The prism is constituted by the child's awareness and understanding of the situation, the child's attitude towards the situation and child's emotional relationship with the

situation. The child's social position and role also plays an important role in the construction of the *perezhivanie*, though Vygotsky (1994b) has not mentioned that directly. However, from his example of the three children of an intoxicated mother, it is evident that a child's social position and role is also an important factor which influences child's relationship with the environment. In the example, we can see that the eldest child's understanding of the problem of the intoxicated mother was different than his younger siblings. Instead of being afraid of his intoxicated mother's behaviour, he was taking responsibility for saving his younger siblings and calming down his mum. As there was no other adult in the family, the eldest child played an adult's role, which caused a striking change in his development. Thus, a child's attributes influence their relationship with the environment. And the child's attitude and emotional relation with the environment are also influenced by situational characteristics. Therefore, Vygotsky defined *perezhivanie* as **a unit** and indivisible state where both personal characteristics and situational characteristics are represented (Vygotsky, 1994b).

Vygotsky (1994b), stated that all of our personal constitutional characteristics do not take part equally. Some of the personal constitutional characteristics may play a primary role in one situation, and in another situation, those characteristics may have only a minor role or no role at all. He argued that to know a child's constitutional characteristics is not most important "but what is important for us to find out is which of these constitutional characteristics have played a decisive role in determining the child's relationship to a given situation." (Vygotsky, 1994b, p. 341).

Next, the concept of ideal and real forms of development is discussed and the section also elaborates the significance of the "social situation of development" as cultural-historical concepts of development are interrelated.

Ideal and real forms of development

Vygotsky further explained why the social situation is a source of development in relation to the concept of “ideal” and “real” form of development. Vygotsky (1994b) gave an example of speech development to elaborate on the fact. As a result of the historical development of humankind, speech exists in our environment. A developed form of speech is already in use in social interactions. The term “ideal form” refers to any developed form of cultural and psychological tool. In contrast, he referred to the primary or immature state of ideal form as “real form”. For example, he mentioned an adult’s speech as an “ideal form” of speech and child’s speech as a “real form” of speech. That is, the elements of mature or adult speech are still developing in the child.

According to Vygotsky (1994b), usually, the ideal form of speech is always present for a child in his/her environment. Even when the child speaks with one or two words, adults around the child speak in the ideal form of language. Later through the developmental process (interaction between the ideal and real form), the child learns the ideal form of speech. While the child learns the ideal form, it has a different relationship with the same surrounding environment in comparison to the child’s relationship with the environment previously, while his speech was in a real or immature form. Therefore, this is another example of how the same environmental factor (e.g., the ideal form of speech) related to a child differently at different stages of her/his development. In other words, Vygotsky stated that the same social situation related to a child in different ways at different stages of life and thus creates a different social situation of development for a child.

How are these concepts related to the child with disabilities? The fundamental law of development is the same for children with or without disabilities. Vygotsky (1994b) invited us to imagine a child without disability who is reared among all deaf people. He claimed in such a hypothetical situation, the child will have babbling, but his speech will not develop. Babbling is

hereditary, but speech development is social. Therefore, the interaction between “ideal form” and “real form” helps the child to be competent in the ideal or standard form of development. For children with disabilities, because of their biological difference, the usual cultural interaction between the ideal form and real form sometimes differs. Vygotsky gave an example of children with hearing impairment (deaf). He said such children cannot hear the ideal form of speech, and they develop special kinds of speech and signs, which are limited in relation to the ideal form of speech. In Vygotsky’s (1994b) words:

> Research has revealed that deaf and dumb [sic] children create their own peculiar speech, mimicry and a very richly developed sign language. Such a child develops his own different, personal language. The children develop this language in co-operation, in society. But can one compare the development of this sign language with the development of speech in children who have a chance to interact with the ideal form? Of course not. So this, generally, means that if we are dealing with a situation where this ideal form is not present in the environment and what we have is interaction between several rudimentary forms, the resulting development has an extremely limited, reduced and impoverished character. (p.347)

Therefore, it is noteworthy how the same social situation creates a different relationship for different children based on various factors. For children with disabilities, the usual interaction between the ideal form and real form may be disrupted and thus creates another level of variation in the relationship between the child and the environment.

Motive and demand

Psychological investigations have tried to understand the cause of human actions and personality in the life course for a long time. Vygotsky (1993) analytically presented that there were two opposite notions to explain the phenomena of human actions and personality development. One notion was backward or past-oriented in relation to time, and another was forward or future-oriented. Vygotsky (1993) provided the example that Freud’s theory explained what an individual is presenting as his personality was rooted in the person’s childhood – a backward relation of personality or actions. In contrast, another notion explains that a person’s present actions are

future-oriented – a forward relation of action and goal. Vygotsky (1993) supported the latter notion rather than the former to explain human actions.

Vygotsky (1993) explained it is not possible to understand a social revolution from statistics without knowing the historical tendencies of that social change. Similarly, to understand child development, we need to understand the tendencies of actions throughout development. He further explained that the encountered difficulties of obstacles for a child create future-oriented tendencies to overcome the obstacles. In traditional psychology, goal-oriented actions are interpreted as internal or intrinsic force from the child. However, Vygotsky argued that the direction of psychological forces works differently. The child's immature or unadapted social status is the basis of the genesis of developmental motive.

According to Vygotsky (1993), "For years on end, a child remains unfit for independent existence, and in his inadequacy and childhood awkwardness lie the seeds of his development." (p 160). Humans as social beings want to be part of society. The child's limited capacity and failure to adhere to social demands create the child's intention to adopt social demands. Thus, the personal motive of an individual develops through participating in social activities (Fleer, 2012).

Hedegaard (2002) defined motive as the child's goal, which defines the child's actions in different activities over a period. When the child's motive does not match with the social demand, the developmental crisis appears. If the child gets support in the crisis, he /she becomes capable to fulfil the social demand and his motive orientation changes (Hedegaard, 2012). Moreover, the child's motive also brings demands on others in the social situation. However, there is a difference between child motive and child demand. Hedegaard (2018) clarified that child's motive refers to what is important and meaningful to a child in a social situation and the child's demand can be relevant to the child's care need and child's motive. Therefore, it can be

said the development process continues in the dialectical interplay of the child's motive and social demand.

Conclusion

This chapter presents an overview of Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory on child development, disability and inclusion through different concepts within his theory. There are more concepts of Vygotsky's theory which cannot be presented here considering the scope of this study. Moreover, few concepts which are discussed here will be used explicitly in data analysis. However, all concepts presented here have framed this study and have been utilised either explicitly or implicitly to understand the everyday participation of children in the preschool setting. As the concepts of *perezhivanie* and social situation of development help to conceptualise and study the child's engagement in an environment, I considered those concepts to investigate how the child's participation is supported through the conditions being created for their development. In line with this, the interaction between the ideal form and real form of development and the interplay between social demand and the child's motive in their social situations, are also significant to understand. Moreover, the concepts of primary disability, secondary disability and alternative ways of development were used to analyse the data. Thus cultural-historical concepts are used in my study to explain the term "participation" from a cultural-historical perspective (see Figure 3.8).

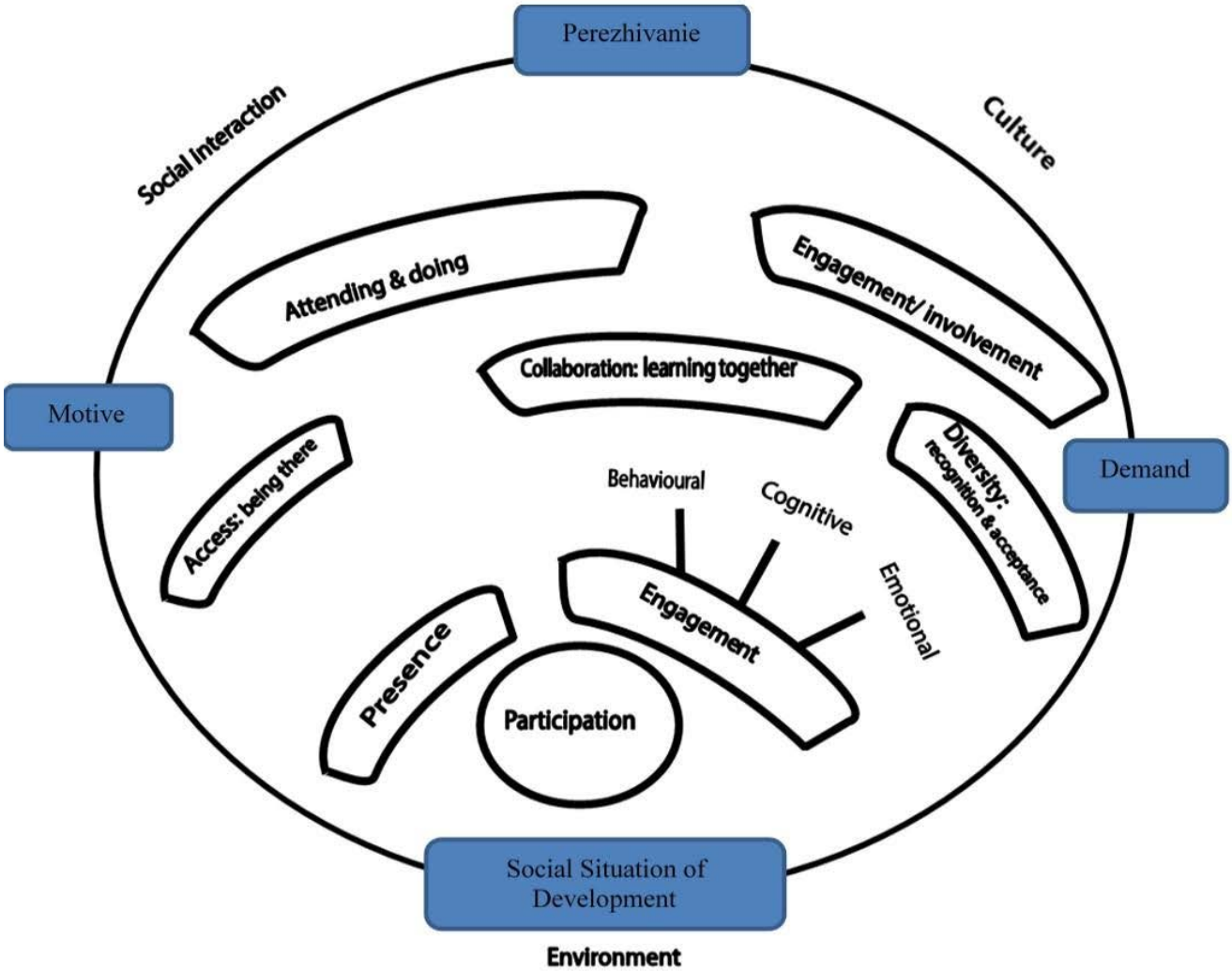

Figure 3.8: Cultural-historical framing of participation

Based on the cultural-historical view of participation, I explored how children with disabilities are experiencing the ideal form of development in preschool (as conceptualised from a cultural-historical perspective here). The elements of participation, which were discussed in Chapter 1, are significantly embedded in the cultural-historical theory. The theory emphasised the child's social interaction, her/his relationship with the situation or environment, emotional aspects and how these factors influence the cognitive engagement of the child. The focus of cultural-historical theory is the process of development rather than the result of development. Therefore, this theory values the participation process or engagement rather than frequency of participation and achievement.

The next chapter will present the research design of this study.

Chapter 4: Research Design

Chapter 4: Research Design

Introduction

This chapter presents the philosophical basis of this research project and its design for answering the research questions. I chose cultural-historical theory to investigate the participation of children with disabilities in mainstream preschools. Cultural-historical theory guides researchers about appropriate methodology based on its stance on child development. The methodology and methods of this study will be presented under the following headings:

1) The theoretical foundation of this research
2) Cultural-historical methodology
3) Study design
4) Context
5) Participant selection
6) Data collection methods
7) Data analysis
8) Ethical consideration
9) The researcher's role in the study
10) The rigour of the study
11) Limitations of the study

The theoretical foundation of this research

Academic research designs are built upon on philosophical foundations. Like other contemporary social science researchers, my ontological belief is that reality is dynamic and socially constructed. According to Stetsenko (2015), the ontological assumption of cultural-historical theory is that reality is dynamic and keeps changing as a result of collaborative practices of people in society.

The epistemological position of the cultural-historical methodology is interpretivism (Bruner, 1987). This epistemology is different from positivism as the subject matter of natural science compared with social science is separate, and the processes of knowing will be different from natural science (Bryman, 2016).

Generally, this study is qualitative within the constructive ontological stance, and its epistemological position is interpretivism. In simple words, as my research aim is to explore the nature and the process of participation of children with disabilities in a specific setting (preschool), the qualitative approach is chosen to gain deep insights. The qualitative approach helps to capture "rich description of the social world" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 12). According to Creswell (2014), a qualitative approach is the best way to understand a phenomenon in depth. Qualitative research takes place in natural settings and thus helps to get closer to individuals' knowledge and experiences in a specific context (Finlay & Evans, 2009). Moreover, the flexible nature of qualitative research design allows the researcher to respond according to the situation (Bryman, 2012).

Specifically, this study chose the cultural-historical approach to explore the participation of children with disabilities in mainstream preschools. The overarching constructivism and interpretivism ontology and epistemological stance are not adequate to justify the uniqueness of the cultural-historical approach of studying children's development. Cultural-historical theory also suggested a qualitative approach to study children's psychological development. However, cultural-historical theory viewed child development as a dynamic, dialectic and relational whole, and thus it opened a new window for researching children's development. For example, Bruner (1987) pointed out that Vygotsky not only considered word meaning, grammar and contextual features of language but also considered the underlying individual's motive in a social situation. Vygotsky (1987) criticised the superficial interpretation of facts. As Vygotsky (1987) suggested,

“We must first clarify the *philosophy of the fact* [Italics in original], the philosophy of its acquisition and interpretation. Otherwise, the facts will remain silent and dead” (p. 55).

The methodology of a study depends on the relevant discipline, the inquiry objective, and the researcher’s choice. According to Vygotsky (1997), “Finding a method [sic] is one of the most important tasks of the researcher. The method in such cases is simultaneously a prerequisite and product…of research…The method must be adequate to the subject studied” (p. 27). In this study, I have therefore chosen cultural-historical methodology to explore the participation of children with disabilities in preschool.

Cultural-historical methodology

Cultural-historical theory not only provides theoretical understanding about child development but also inspires researchers to think about appropriate strategies for researching children. However, Vygotsky’s methodological contribution to investigating child development has received limited attention in the literature (Fleer, 2017). Cultural-historical methodology is inspired by anthropological research practice, and some of its features are similar to ethnography, but there are, however, differences (Hedegaard, 2008c). According to Veresov (2014), cultural-historical theory is a methodological rethinking and exploring the nature of child development. As a general framework, cultural-historical theory guides researchers to select “research methods and procedures (experimental tools)” in line with “theoretical concepts and principles (theoretical research tools) and therefore make a coherent whole. This coherent whole of theoretical and experimental tools is what could be called ‘cultural-historical research methodology’” (Veresov, 2014, p. 222).

Vygotsky rejected quantitative assessment and advocated for qualitative evaluation to understand the child as a whole. Therefore, Vygotsky’s focus of the investigation was a process

of development rather than the result of development. He argued that traditionally researchers investigate the result of development, which he labelled as a “fossil” of development. Addressing the result of development as our “psychological fossil” Vygotsky (1997), explained:

> They (psychological fossil) actually are outside the process of development. Their own development is finished. In this combination of plasticity and fossilization, initial and final points of development, simplicity and completeness lies their great advantage for research, making them incomparable material for study (p. 44).

Vygotsky (1993) also mentioned the methodological crisis to understand the development of children with special needs. He shared the story of a child whose mother came for psychiatric consultation for her son as he was displaying tantrums and anger. The psychiatrist described the child’s problem as “epileptoid”. The mother asked what that means, and the psychiatrist explained that the child has a behaviour problem and tantrum. Vygotsky criticised the psychiatrist’s response as just a more sophisticated description of the mother’s complaint. He said,

> She did not know how to react to the child's explosions, how to act with him, how to get rid of those explosions, and how to make it possible for him to attend school. The diagnosis did not offer answers to any of these questions.
>
> (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 243)

Vygotsky (1993) argued that this kind of research provides ***dry data of an individual***. He mentioned that before Darwin’s evolutionary theory, the whale was categorised as a fish as it looks like other fish. However, genetically it is a mammal. Before Darwin, biologists classified animals based entirely on external characteristics, the phenotypical. Vygotsky (1998) also claimed that child psychology professionals try to categorise age-related complex symptoms as being superficial.

Therefore, cultural-historical methodology attempted to address the methodological crisis in understanding child development and the issues and problems of child development. This methodology does not only inspire qualitative research approach but also guides researchers to understand the problem holistically. Whereas many researchers disconnect the subject of the

research from its system in order to gain objective information, cultural-historical researchers try to study the subject while it remains “part of a dynamic ecosystem of interactions” (Fleer, 2014, p. 4). Moreover, a dialectical logic is applied to understand the contradiction between “the particular” and “the general” together as synthesis (Fleer, 2014, p. 9). For instance, this study further investigated the inclusion of particular participants who are active members of the broader preschool system. Therefore, without understanding the general practice of society and the preschool system, it is not adequate to understand the participant children’s inclusion.

Hedegaard and her colleagues advanced the legacy of Vygotsky’s methodology and provided researchers with a methodological frame to study children in their everyday life (Fleer, 2017). Hedegaard named the methodological framework as a wholeness approach or dialectical-interactive approach (Hedegaard, 2008b). Hedegaard conceptualised a model to illustrate that the child comes to different social institutions in a society and the child’s learning and development flourish through the child’s participation in various institutions (Hedegaard, 2008a).

As a cultural-historical researcher, I investigate the child, child’s disability, and inclusion regarding the child’s relationship with the social world. According to Hedegaard (2012), in institutional practices, child development unfolds with three different perspectives: societal perspective, institutional perspective and individual perspective (see Figure 4.9).

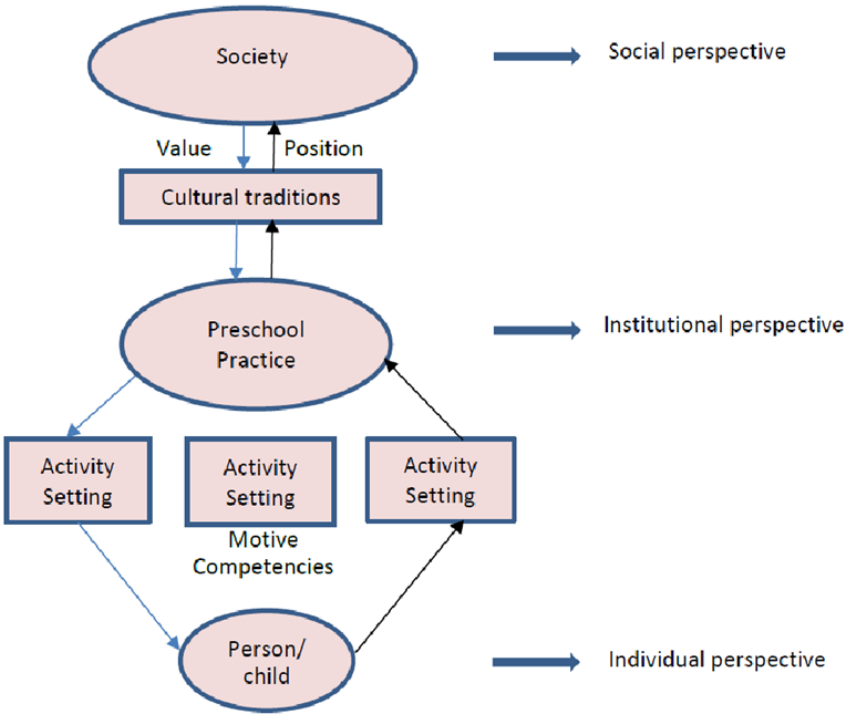

Figure 4.9: Children's participation in preschool and dialectical interplay of social and individual; Adapted from Hedegaard (2012) model of children's activity settings in different institutions

In order to understand the practice of an institution, we can look at the smaller unit "activity setting" (Hedegaard, 2012, p. 131). On the one hand, social values and institutional practices influence the child and, on the other hand, the child changes the social settings through his/her actions (Hedegaard, 2012). In this study participation of children with disabilities will be understood from the children's perspective, preschool perspective and societal perspective. Through the participation process of children with disabilities in the activity settings in preschool, this study will try to understand the inclusive practice of a mainstream preschool (see Figure 4.9). This cultural-historical methodology will then be appropriate to answer two main research questions which are dialectically interrelated as follows:

Figure 4.10: Addressing research questions using Hedegaard's model of activity settings

Research Question 1 is overarching the cultural context and practices of preschool, which influence a child's participation in preschool activity settings (see Figure 4.10). At the same time, a child's action affects his/her participation and activity settings; Research Question 2 addresses this aspect. Thus, the study will try to understand the participation process of children with disabilities as a whole. Research Question 3 addresses enablers and barriers in the participation process of children with disabilities in preschool practices. Based on the epistemological, ontological and methodological position, the next section presents the study design.

Study design

I choose one preschool program in a long-day-care centre to explore the participation of children with disabilities in-depth. As cultural-historical researchers need to study different perspectives to understand the child as a whole, the single preschool selection seemed most suitable for this PhD study with a limited timeframe. I choose multiple focus children in one preschool to gain insights about the participation of children with disabilities in mainstream preschools. The study design was as follows:

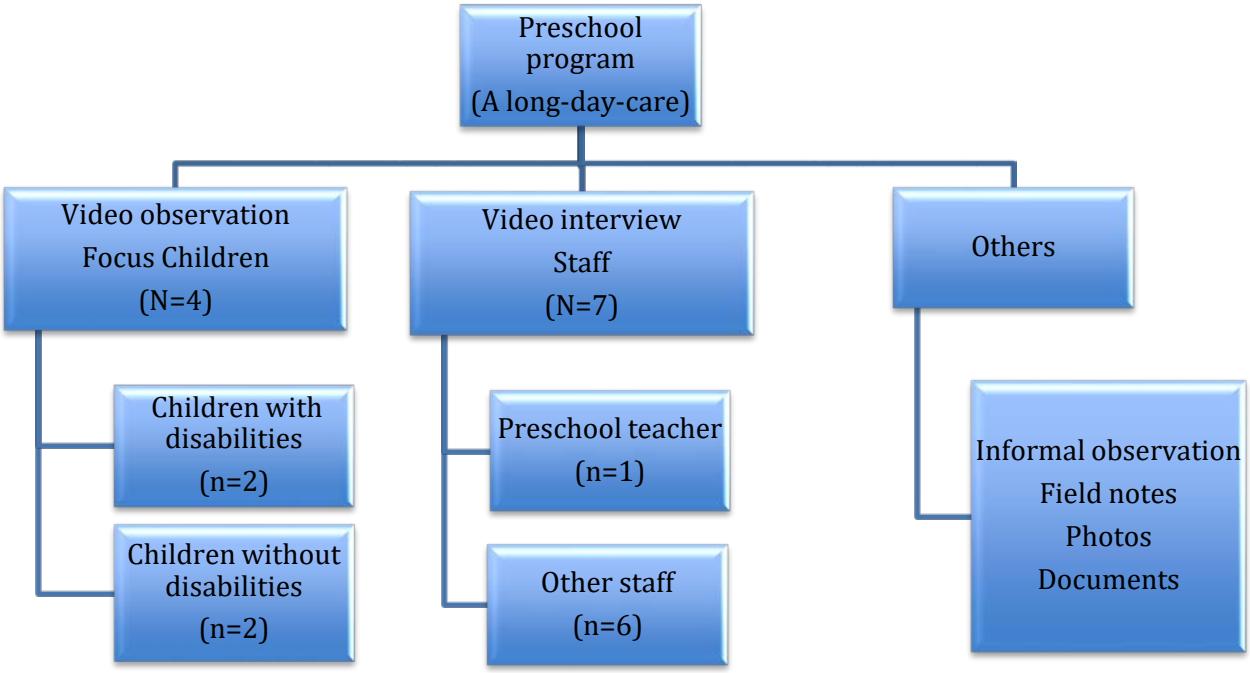

Figure 4.11: The study design

The study was conducted in a preschool program embedded in a long-day-care centre in Melbourne, Victoria. Four focus children were selected for video observation in the centre (see Figure 4.11). Staff and other children (with consent) were also recorded by video if they were involved with the focus child at the moment of observation. Seven staff including the preschool teacher were interviewed and video recorded. The preschool teacher and behavioural therapist were interviewed multiple times for in-depth information and clarification. The researcher had observed the preschool practice informally for two weeks before conducting the formal video recorded observations and interviews (see Figure 4.11). In addition to that field notes, photos and relevant documents were collected. Home visits were also planned originally for observing the child in home setting and for conducting parent-child interview. However, home visits were cancelled from the study design as no family gave consent for this purpose.

Next, the context of the study is discussed in social, institutional and individual levels.

Context

In social science, context plays an important role in studies. However, in the cultural-historical theory and methodology, the study context plays a central and integral role. It has already been discussed in the methodology that cultural-historical researchers understand the participant's participation in relation to macro (social-cultural), meso (institutional) and micro (activity settings) contexts where the participation takes place. Therefore, the context of the study is presented under the following sub-sections, social and cultural context, institutional context, activity settings, and includes the individuals who participate in the context (see Figure 4.9).

Social and cultural context

The study has been conducted in Australia, and therefore the Australian social and cultural contexts were considered in this study. Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services vary from country to country. Australia, as a nation, focuses on quality care and education for young children. In 2007, the Australian government initiated system reform to ensure quality ECEC services all over Australia (Tayler, 2016). Preschool in Australia comprises short duration play-based learning programs for children one or two years before their formal schooling and "degree-qualified" staff members deliver the program (Tayler, 2016). According to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR, 2011), most of the Australian children (70%) participate in a preschool program (though not compulsory) at around four years of age. There are stand-alone preschool programs as well as shared-premises preschool programs, which are included in long-day-care settings or attached to schools. The preschool teacher should have a four-year university degree (as per recent target) in Early Childhood Teaching for both long-day-care and standalone preschool (DEEWR, 2011). Inclusion of children with special needs in early childhood education and care services are discussed in Australian national policies (see Chapter 2).

Institutional context

I sent out emails to different preschools in Melbourne to seek permission to conduct the fieldwork. The Butterfly Preschool (pseudonym) gave permission for the fieldwork at their premises. The preschool is situated in a suburb of Greater Dandenong, South-east Melbourne, and the area is one of the most disadvantaged areas in Victoria (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2013). The Butterfly Preschool is a long-day-care centre, and it was organised into two different groups: i) Baby and Toddler Room (0-3 years), and ii) Preschool room (3-5 years). The preschool room was also referred as kinder room in the centre. During the fieldwork period, 16 to 21 children were enrolled in the preschool section (3-5 years). Figure 4.12 and Figure 4.13 present the preschool floor plan and playground facilities respectively.

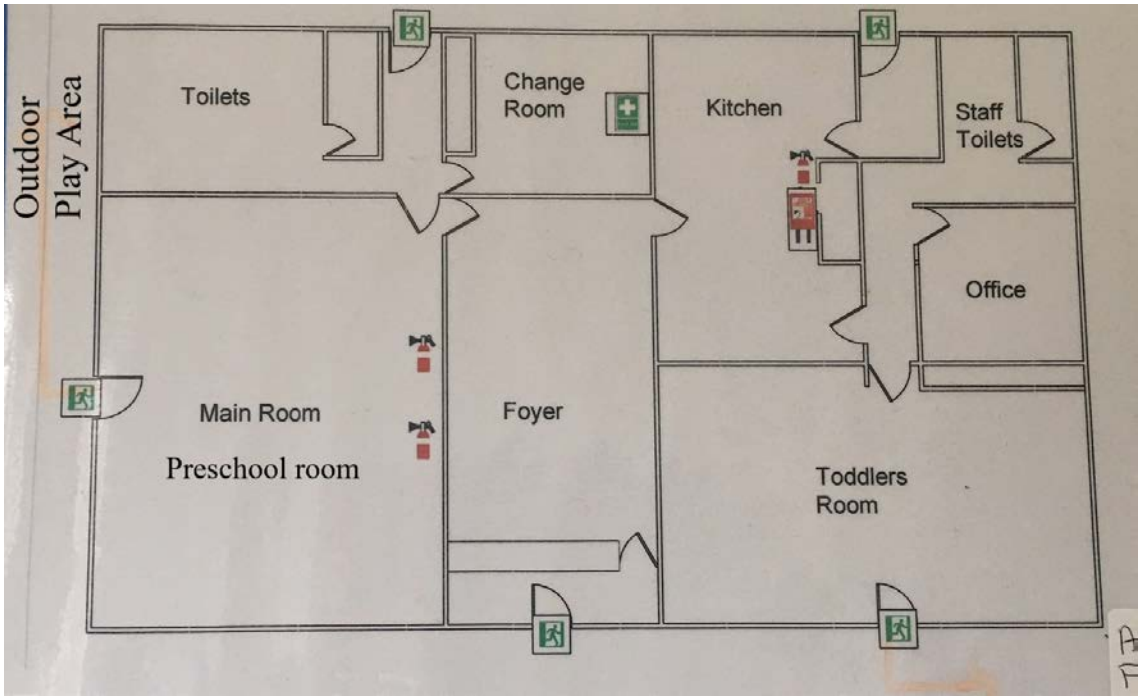

Figure 4.12: Floor plan of the preschool (collected from the centre notice board)

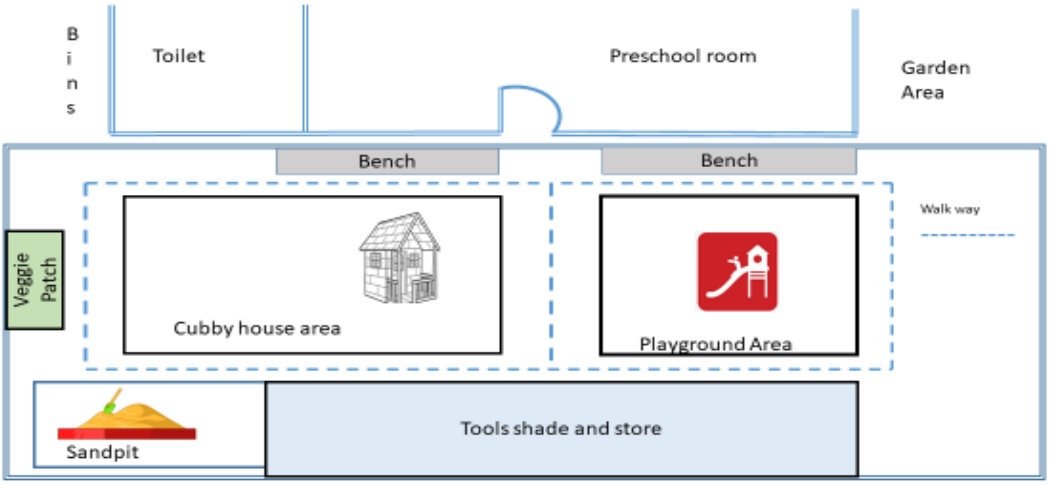

Figure 4.13: Playground layout (drawn by the researcher)

Melbourne is a multicultural city, and that was reflected in preschool settings. Children from the multicultural backgrounds were attending the long-day-care centre. For instance, children with Indian, Samoan, Vietnamese, Serbian, New Zealand, European, Sri Lankan, and Chinese cultural heritages were attending the centre.

The centre had two centre directors who were also the owners of the centre. The centre employed both permanent and casual staff. Moreover, there were a few pre-service educators from universities and professional training institutions present at the centre. For the preschool group, a qualified (Bachelor honours degree) preschool teacher and two teacher assistants were employed. However, the centre directors and other educators, including pre-service (placement) educators were also involved with the activities of the preschool sections. During mealtimes and outdoor playtimes, children from Toddler Room and Preschool Room gathered together. Both directors and educators were sharing their responsibilities formally and informally, and they created a family image, as staff felt the centre as like their family.

The day-care centre was accessible to all children, regardless of their backgrounds and abilities. There were a few children with disabilities, a few children with social trauma and disadvantaged circumstances. The preschool presented a welcoming environment for all children and educators. Both preschool directors, the preschool teacher, two teacher assistants, one cognitive behaviour therapist, three educators and seven pre-service teachers were observed and filmed while they were engaged in different activity settings. Altogether, 16 participants were followed and filmed while they were involved with children in different activity settings. Among all participant staff (see Appendix 9 for full list), seven took part in video interviews. The following Table 4.2 presents the details of participant preschool staff, including the pre-service (placement) teachers who were video recorded in both observations and interviews.

Table 4.2: The summary of staff participation

Sl.	**Name**	**Position, qualification and experience in ECEC**	**Experience with children with disabilities**
1	Jane	Director/owner Certificate three And Diploma 15 years	Yes, as an educator she met children with disabilities
2	Monica	Preschool Teacher Bachelor (Honours) degree 20 years	Yes, she has a son with autism and as an educator met children with disabilities.
3	Amanda	Teacher Assistance Diploma 1 month	No
4	Lisa	Teacher Assistance Certificate three Diploma (continuing; nearly finished) 3.5 years	Yes, she has relative with autism and as an educator met children with disabilities.
5	Tracey	Cognitive Behaviour Therapist Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) Training 12 years	Yes, she has a son with autism and as a therapist met children with disabilities.
6	Azra	Educator Certificate III Diploma (continuing) 1 year	No
7	Ming	Placement (pre-service) Teacher Master degree student	No

Activity settings

In order to understand the institutional practices, I observed the children and adults in different activity settings of the preschool. According to Hedegaard (2012), “an activity setting can be compared to the scene in a theatre where both the materiality and the way of interaction reflect tradition in an institutional practice” (p. 131). In Butterfly Preschool, there were different kinds of activity settings (see table 4.3). For example, Indoor activity settings included circle time, group activity, different free play settings, different mealtimes, and different child-initiated play. Outdoor activity settings included the play in the sandpit, play in the playground, play in the cubby house, gardening, water play, group activity, bike riding, different children-initiated plays, and occasional mealtimes. The focus children were observed in all the different activity settings.

Table 4.3: Activity settings in Butterfly Preschool practice

Different activity settings	**Descriptions**
Circle times	In circle times children sit on the mat together, and educator sits face to face with children on mat or chair. Educator discusses a central topic, rhymes, counting, letter-picture quiz etc.
Group activities	Educator initiates activities for a group of children. Usually, 4-8 children participate in a group activity—for example, counting game, building blocks, painting, letter-bids activity etc.
Different free play settings	Educators organised the room with different theme-based play artefacts. For example, kitchen play settings, jungle play settings, sandy surface play settings, train play settings etc.
Mealtimes	There were three mealtimes in a day. Breakfast/morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea. Meals were prepared in the preschool kitchen and served by the educators. Children from both the toddler room and preschool room attended mealtimes together.
Outdoor activity settings	As well as different indoor activity settings, there were different outdoor activity settings. Mostly children were involved in different free play settings. For example, bike riding, playing in the playground, playing in the cubby house, playing in the sandpit. However, sometimes educators initiated some play activities (e.g., blowing bubbles, water play, and gardening) and sometimes educators joined in children's play.

As the Butterfly Preschool is a long-day-care centre, it was open from 7:00 am to 6:30 pm on weekdays. Children used to start and finish their day, depending on their family's routine. On arrival, the preschool teacher or director welcomed the child/children and talked to the parents. Children were free to do any activities. However, they had to follow some clear rules as well. For instance, wash hands before meals, attend mealtimes, and wear sun hats in outdoor activities.

Children (individuals)

Children from the preschool group (3-5 years) were chosen as focus children. Focus children were followed in different activity settings of the preschool. Four focus children participated in this study. Moreover, six children from the preschool group and five children from toddler group (0-3 years) participated in the study as indirect participants. The participants from toddler group were either the focus children's siblings or indirect participants' (from preschool group) siblings. Indirect participants were video recorded while they were involved with the focus children in different activity settings.

The average age of all focus children was 3.71 years. Two children with disabilities and two children without disabilities participated as focus children. Among participants with disabilities, one child was diagnosed with Soto's syndrome, and another was diagnosed with autism.

Participant selection

This study contains both adult and child participants. I followed the opportunistic and purposive technique to select participants. For adult participants, I handed out the explanatory letters and consent forms (see Appendix 7 & 8) through the preschool authority. The adults who agreed to participate, I have observed and video recorded while they were involved in their activities with children in the natural setting of the preschool. Among the participants, I purposefully selected participants for interview/s in order to get a deeper understanding of the central phenomena (participation of children with disabilities). Qualitative researchers use purposive sampling technique for selecting participants intentionally to study the central phenomena in-depth (Creswell, 2012).

In the case of selecting children for participation, I also used opportunistic and purposive technique. First, I provided explanatory letters, consent forms and assent forms (see Appendix 3, 4, 5 & 6) to the preschool authority to be sent to all families. Families were instructed to discuss the research with children in simple words and to get their assent. Families submitted their consent and assent forms in the particular box as instructed, and later I collected the submitted forms. After obtaining the responses from the families, I consulted the preschool teacher to select the children who have identified/diagnosed disabilities and children without disabilities. The plan was to choose two children with disabilities and two children without disabilities. Children with disabilities were defined as children who have a diagnosis. And children who did not have any diagnosis or were not under any diagnosis process were defined as children without disabilities.

First, I obtained consent from one family of a child with disability, who was diagnosed with Soto's syndrome. After a few months, another child with disabilities enrolled in the preschool and the family gave consent for their child's participation. Among the children without disabilities, I found one critical case who, by definition, falls into the category "child without disability". However, the preschool teacher made the assumption that the child might have a disability but the child's parent disagreed with her. It was an opportunity to reconsider and rethink about the participant. I decided to continue with this participant for the following reasons:

- This child can participate under the category of "children without disability" according to the plan.
- The child can present as a critical case and I can gain broader insight about the participation of children with regard to disability.

- As a researcher, I decided to continue with this participant as an emerging opportunity. Patton (2015) described such selection as emergent sampling, which was not anticipated in advance.

Therefore, it can be said that the selected participants represent a spectrum of children — those without disability to children with disabilities. The question may arise as to why I have chosen two participants beyond the category of children with disabilities. As the study is about the participation of children with disabilities, I had to face this question several times. First, children without disabilities were selected as cases not for comparison purposes but rather to better, and more fully, understand the central phenomenon (participation of children with disabilities in mainstream preschool).

It is common in experimental research that the researcher selects a control group of participants to better understand the intervention impact, and it is also a validity measure for the findings or claims. Similarly, in some qualitative studies, the researcher selects confirming and disconfirming cases (Patton, 2015) to validate emerging findings. The concept of inclusion is not a neutral concept, rather it is underpinned by the values of social justice and equity. As a result, while researchers look for inclusive practice, they also check for any exclusionary risk or challenges. It is a dialectical reality. If there is no exclusion in society, there would not in reality be any concept of inclusion. If I find any exclusionary risk in practice, how do I confirm that the children with disabilities are experiencing a lack of opportunities or being treated differently because of their disability?

It is also possible that children without disabilities are also experiencing the same lack of opportunity. Then it will not be an exclusionary risk due to the child's disability. Therefore, to validate such findings, it was essential to select children beyond the disability category. Moreover, it was helpful to understand how the same social situations create different

developmental conditions for children without disabilities and for children with disabilities. Vygotsky himself brought in examples of children with disabilities while he was explaining child development in general, and vice versa. Vygotsky suggested dynamic and relational interpretation of information, as he said, “This dynamic and relative interpretation of environment is the most important source of information” (Vygotsky, 1994b, p. 344). Considering the same advantage, it was planned to collect data through home visits (observation and interview), though the study aimed to learn about the participation of children with disabilities in mainstream preschools.

Finally, no family permitted a home visit and so data were collected from the preschool only. Except for the four focus children, all other children (with consent and assent) participated indirectly, as they were observed and video recorded while they were participating with focus children in different activity settings. Different data collection methods were applied to understand child participation in preschool culture. Qualitative researchers usually collect data from multiple sources instead of relying on a single data source (Creswell, 2014). Capturing different people’s viewpoints is recommended in cultural-historical methodology to understand child participation in relation to the social situation (Hedegaard, 2008b). Similarly, researchers employ multiple methods to collect data from different sources, based on the research aims.

Data collection methods

Data collection methods are selected based on the research approach and the theoretical framework. Data were collected from the Butterfly Preschool (pseudonym) through video observation and video interview. Moreover, field notes and photos were taken, and documents were obtained. I used pseudonyms for participants in this study. Table 4.4 presents data collection summary:

Table 4.4: Summary of data collection

Where: A long-day-care centre (preschool program) South-east Melbourne, Victoria **Duration:** 8 Months (including two months interval) Informal observation: 5 visits to the centre Video observation & video interview: 23 visits to the centre Follow up interviews after field work: 2 visits to the centre			
Participants		**Methods**	**Hour**
Focus Children (4)		Video observation	Total (40 Hr)
Maliha (with Soto's syndrome)	4 years		13 hr
Toby (with Autism Spectrum disorder)	3 years 6 months		8 hr
Alex (without disability)	3 years 10 months		8 hr
Ajith (without disability)	3 years 6 month		10.5 hr
Teacher/staff (7)		Video interview	4 hr
Other data		Photos Field notes Documents	**Total video data 44 hours**

Video observation

First, I observed participants in Butterfly Preschool as a participant-observer. It is crucial to observe participants in their natural settings (Hedegaard, 2008a). According to Creswell (2014), observation has advantages to study participants for whom verbalising their ideas is difficult and to capture actual activities in the setting where they take place. Before starting the video observation and interview, I informally observed the preschool activities for two weeks and took field notes. This initial observation period was helpful to understand the preschool practices, roles of different staff and in building rapport with staff and children. More importantly, the next video recording phase became more natural as my role and research aims were familiar to most of the adults, and I was familiar to the children.

I observed, and video recorded the participants' activities in preschool to develop a detailed picture of the preschool practice. Moreover, video observation is a suitable method of

data collection for cultural-historical researchers as they need to revisit data several times for interpreting data from different perspectives (Fleer, 2008). I digitally recorded the focus children's activities in a preschool setting. In social science, research tends to focus on the social interaction of all actors in an environment and traditional psychological researcher tends to focus on the individual participant only (Fleer, 2008). In contrast, my camera followed both the focus child and social interactions in a preschool setting, as cultural-historical researchers try to understand children in relation to their whole social situation (Fleer, 2008).

The initial plan was to use two video cameras. It was planned to fix one video camera in a steady position (using a tripod) so that it could capture classroom interactions as a whole scenario and use another camera (handheld) to follow the focus children and their interactions with others. Use of multiple cameras may be beneficial to capture the broader scene (Fleer, 2008) and can be used as a backup. However, in the context of the Butterfly Preschool settings, the researcher found it difficult as multiple activity settings took place simultaneously. Moreover, it was difficult sometimes to assume next activities in the informal practices and manage two cameras.

The video observation was conducted over eight months, including a two-month interval. I had to take two months of maternity leave during data collection. I collected a total of 40 hours of video observation data in preschool settings. Later, I accumulated every focus child's participation in the whole data set. As a researcher, I was the main instrument for data collection. Before and after the maternity leave, a research assistant volunteered to collect data while carrying a video camera and standing for a long time was difficult for me due to medical conditions. The research assistant had experience in video observation, and had finished her doctoral research in education. However, as a main instrument of the data collection, I attended the field and guided the research assistant. My presence was necessary because the researcher

not only collects data in the natural settings but is also involved in the initial analysis, explores relations between previous and ongoing events, and develops further enquiries (Yin, 2018).

The initial plan to observe the focus children in their home settings was cancelled – as previously mentioned, no participant family agreed to a home visit.

Interview

Despite having some benefits of video observation, as discussed earlier, some limitations need to be considered. The video camera is limited, as it does not have peripheral vision (Fleer, 2008). Moreover, observation is not adequate to capture an individual's opinion and guiding principles of their behaviour. Therefore, in addition to video observation, I used face-to-face semi-structured video interview technique. I conducted all interviews with preschool staff and placement teachers. A semi-structured interview protocol, field note, and video clips (as references) were used in interviews to gain further clarification. I interviewed seven adults who were involved in the preschool in different roles (see Table 4.2, page 90). The preschool teacher was interviewed six times and the cognitive behaviour therapist was interviewed twice considering further information, clarification, and the role of the participant. Another five staff were interviewed once. In total, four hours of video interview data were collected in the study. Video interviews were conducted during and after the video observation period.

Hviid (2008) argued that in cultural-historical theory, the interview is not seen as a one-way process where participants talk and the researcher listens and asks questions. Instead, it is a dialogue between the participant and the researcher. Through this dialogue, the researcher benefited from listening to the participant's story as well as the participant benefitting by raising their voice or expressing themselves. The researcher has conducted semi-structured interview/s with the preschool staff. In follow-up interviews the researcher shared video clips from observation or referred observed activity settings with the preschool teacher to collect further

information. In this way, shared knowledge construction occurs in such an interview. According to Hviid (2008, p. 156), “Intersubjectivity and interactivity are basic to interview research.”

The initial plan to conduct the parent-child interviews had to be eliminated from the study as no families gave consent for a home visit.

Field notes, photos and documents

Documents (e.g. attendance sheet, copies of teacher’s digital diary) were collected to analyse. Visual materials (e.g., photograph, art or craftwork of focus child) were also collected as evidence. These data were helpful to understand children’s engagement and teachers’ support in preschools. The document is a valuable source of information in qualitative research, which helps to further understand central phenomena (Creswell, 2012). Moreover, field notes were taken regularly and analysed. These additional information sources were very helpful for cross-examining some information from the video observation and interview data.

Data analysis

Organisation and analysis of the data are significant steps of any research, which help to answer the research question/s of a study. Data from different sources were organised and saved securely. After collecting data, field notes and video-logs (summary of the video files) were written regularly. Video files and photos were labelled and saved securely. Video data were watched thoroughly and trimmed into smaller clips for further analysis. However, the original record was saved and watched occasionally to check the detailed context. Selected video clips and all interview recordings were transcribed to analyse (see Figure 4.14). Data were analysed at three different levels, suggested by Hedegaard (2008c):

- Common sense interpretation
- Situated practice interpretation
- Thematic level interpretation

Common sense interpretation

This is the first impression or comment or understanding of the researcher about the data. It is the general interpretation of data which may not require precise theoretical knowledge. According to Hedegaard (2008c), “this kind of interpretation does not demand explicit concepts, but some obvious relations stand out, and the patterns in interaction can be seen” (p. 58). In this level, after watching the video data, initial interpretation was noted in the video log. Based on the initial interpretation video clips were made and transcribed.

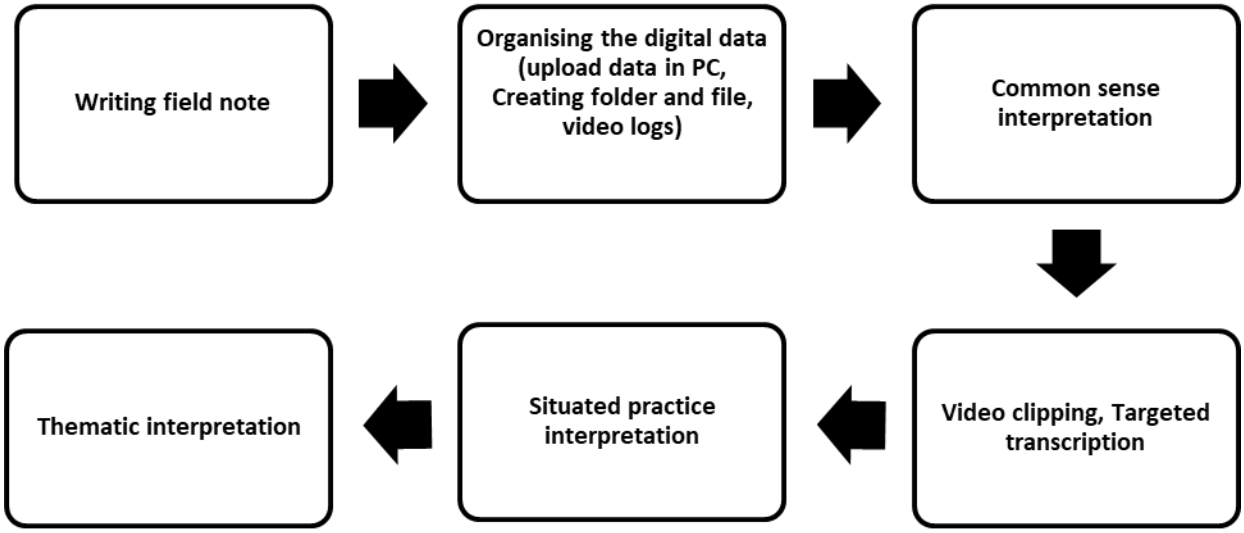

Figure 4.14: The data analysis procedure

Situated practice interpretation

The second step of the analysis is situated practice interpretation, where the researcher seeks links between different data gathered from on different occasions in the same project to understand general practice (Hedegaard, 2008c). The researcher looks for the basic categories, those that have already arisen, and key concepts across the data of the same project to understand the practice. This process involves the researcher in understanding the differences and similarities among

categories and, as a result, formation and reformation of categories is going on, which leads to new insights (Hedegaard, 2008c). For example, a category "silent communication" was checked in the whole data set to confirm that it is significant to consider in next level of analysis; it is not a standalone aspect of evidence in the data set.

Thematic interpretation

The thematic level of analysis is directly connected with the research aim (Hedegaard, 2008c). Based on the research aim, theoretical concepts and data, researchers try to create categories and explain relations between categories in order to answer research questions. This study used different cultural-historical theoretical concepts, such as primary disability, secondary disability, alternative ways of development, motive and demand, social situation of development, *perezhivanie*, ideal and real form of development (see Chapters 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9). For example, how the category "silent communication" is relevant to the participation of the focus child was analysed. Here, the theoretical concepts "secondary disability" and "primary disability" were used as analytical tools to interpret the data.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations in research are vital for any socially based research. In this study, children with disabilities participated, and can be considered as doubly vulnerable – being a child as well as being an individual with disability. Therefore, I needed to be doubly aware so that my research activities may not make my participants even more vulnerable (Liamputtong, 2007). The research methodology and methods of the study coincide with the ethical considerations for the participants. For example, this naturalistic inquiry did not manipulate the environment (Gray & Winter, 2011) and did not separate participant children from their context and peers. In the observation, no child was identified differently within the group on the basis of their disability, or for their cultural and

social background. As a participant observer, the researcher and the research assistant reduced the gap between their adult outsider position and the children.

Researchers must give enough information about the study and inform participants' freedom to make decisions before taking informed consent from participants (Liamputtong, 2007). According to Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2006), researchers should be honest enough in their study, as they also expect trustworthy answers from participants. I handed out well-informed explanatory letters and consent forms and assent forms to all families and educators (see Appendix 3 to 8) through the preschool authority. Participant families and educators were informed to return the consent and assent forms in a paper-made box, which was placed in the reception area of the preschool. Thus, participants' agency was valued in their decision-making about participating in this research project. Those who initially consented to participation had a choice to withdraw their consent within a six-month period. However, no participant withdrew his or her consent from this research project.

In the case of children's participation in the study, I sought consent from their parents and also the children's own assent. I am always aware of avoiding any harm to research participants, from data collection to reporting findings. Researchers must obey the standard first rule in human conduct – "Do no harm" (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014, p. 56). I am aware of protecting participants' privacy and confidentiality based on their consent. For instance, one family gave consent for the participation of the children but restricted the consent to use any image of the children. I used the pseudonyms of participants and research site in published reports. The research design received approval from the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) under project number 5586 (see Appendix 1). As well, the project also received ethics approval (Approval No. 2017_003316) from the Department of Education and Training, Victoria State Government, Australia (see Appendix 2).

The researcher's role in the study

In qualitative research, the researcher plays a significant role in data collection and interpretation (Finlay & Evans, 2009). Cultural-historical researchers are aware of their double role in the field. On the one hand, the researcher enters into the social situation of others to understand the practice *as a participant* and on the other hand, the researcher enters into the setting with research aims *as a researcher* (Hedegaard, 2008d). Therefore, in video observation, my role was as a participant-observer. Though I did not provide any intervention, some sort of interaction and communication occurred naturally in the social situation, where I also acted as a participant. In interviews, I was an active participant to construct the knowledge with research participants. According to Fontana and Frey (2008), "interviewers are increasingly seen as active participants in an interaction with respondents that are shaped by the contexts and situations in which they take place" (p.144).

As a researcher, I established a trustworthy and respectful relationship with participants. I communicated my role verbally and in clear, written form to my participants, including to the children. I was mindful of my limits and responsibilities in the field. According to Hedegaard (2008d), the observer should not take on the role of the teacher in a school setting, but he/she needs to act like a responsible adult.

Rigour of study

Using particular strategies to ensure the accuracy and credibility of a study is a crucial aspect of qualitative research. The concepts of validity and reliability are viewed differently in qualitative research from the quantitative experimental studies on child development. According to Hedegaard (2008b, p. 43), in classical experiments, "claims for validity are made in relation to the objective measurement of the children's functioning". In a qualitative approach, researchers usually validate their findings through triangulation, member checking and auditing (Creswell,

2014). However, Hedegaard (2008b) stated that in cultural-historical studies, triangulation is not a choice for validation as a hermeneutic approach. She also argued that in cultural-historical research, the validity relies upon how well different perspectives of participants' everyday life practices are captured and linked to child development.

Similarly, the concept of reliability is also used as a tool to judge the rigour of research. While the concept of reliability evolved in quantitative research practice, sometimes it is used as a common tool to evaluate any research. However, qualitative researchers also tried to refer to reliability and validity by using different alternative terms; such as "credibility", "dependability", "accuracy", "transparency" (see Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The notion of reliability in quantitative research does not match with the qualitative approach. Whereas quantitative research aims to achieve objectivity, qualitative research values subjective aspects. In qualitative research, the researcher is viewed as the main instrument of data collection. Moreover, in cultural-historical research the researcher is not only an instrument but also a participant of the study (Hedegaard, 2008d). For example, in this study, my role was as a participant-observer.

More broadly, any study or its stakeholders intend to ensure or look for the rigour of the study, though the terms and aims of qualitative and quantitative studies differ. The rigour of the cultural-historical research depends on how the study findings can be used to interpret everyday phenomena in a logical way considering its theoretical viewpoint. Moreover, a researcher needs to ensure rigour in every single step, in every means, from planning to reporting, in order to achieve rigorousness. As a part of the academic degree, this study was reported to senior researchers and received feedback in three formal steps, apart from the supervisors' guidance.

As the researcher, I frame the research problem, theory and study design in the planning phase. In the data collection and organisation phase, procedures and evidence are documented so

that those could be retrieved and checked when needed. I have shared the findings within different research team members, peers, review panels, and academics for further credibility checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It helped to check whether the findings reflect the reality and feasibility of the practices through sharing them with intellectual colleagues. Moreover, I ensured internal verification through follow-up interviews. I also tried to verify the findings through the study design. It has already been discussed that I observed children without disability to verify any discrimination in the preschool practice.

Limitations of the study

There are some limitations of this study which should be taken into consideration at the outset. In this study, the data were collected from one preschool program and from a small number of participants. Therefore, the study design is not appropriate for the generalisation of the findings. The cultural-historical methodology emphasises a holistic understanding of the child's participation across different institutional settings. Therefore, I planned an intensive data collection phase in the preschool and children's home settings. It was planned to observe the children and sibling/s (if any) in their home settings and to conduct parent-child interviews. However, none of the participant families gave consent for a home visit. Therefore, the parents' perception is missing in understanding the children's participation in the preschool. Though the study aims to explore children's participation in the preschool, the home visit would help to reach a more holistic understanding of the studied phenomena. Another limitation of the study was resource constraint as the study was conducted by a single researcher. For example, multiple camera handling was difficult for one person in the preschool setting.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed both the methodology and method of the study. Specifically, a cultural-historical methodology framed the research design of this study. This chapter also explained how the methodology and theory are interrelated and created a holistic approach to understand and a child's participation in everyday life. This study collected empirical data through video observation, video interview, photos, field notes, documents and the researcher participated in the field as a participant-observer. Data has been analysed in three levels of interpretation (Hedegaard, 2008c). The findings of the study are presented in the next chapters (Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9) with discussion.

Chapter 5: Alternative (roundabout) way of development

Chapter 5: Alternative (roundabout) way of development

Published work – Paper One

Outline of Chapter 5

Chapter 5: Alternative (roundabout) way of development

Thesis with published work: An overview

A thesis with published work also aims to report a coherent study like a traditional thesis. Therefore, instead of listing some published work in the thesis, the student researcher and research supervisors made a pragmatic plan after most of the field work had been done. As a result, the published paper and submitted papers all created a coherent whole in conjunction with other chapters to present this study.

The strategies that have been followed to finalise each paper are three-fold. First, the aim was to submit each paper in a high-ranking peer reviewed journal, which is listed as recommended by the Faculty of Education, Monash University. Second, each paper was presented internationally or at a local conference or in the cultural-historical research community before finalising. Third, each paper represented findings on one focus child's participation in the preschool practice in relation to the research questions.

This thesis included two published paper and one submitted (under review) papers with other chapters.

Backdrop of Paper One

Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 presented the finding that teachers in mainstream settings often feel that they do not have enough knowledge and skills to support children with disabilities (see Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2014; Hoskin et al., 2015). However, it is not generally reported in literature how the mainstream environment creates conditions for children with disabilities and how the children reciprocally enact their way to participate in the mainstream setting. Paper One listed in this thesis

explored Research Question 1 and Research Question 2 and contributed to filling this gap in the literature. Using the concept of "alternative way of development" (Vygotsky, 1993), this paper found the preschool practice and the focus child co-created an alternative way to overcome communication difficulties and reach shared meaning.

Paper One reported the findings based on the focus child Maliha's (pseudonym) participation in the preschool. Maliha was diagnosed as a child with Soto's syndrome. Thirteen hours of video observation data and relevant video interview data were analysed for Paper One.

I wrote Paper One with my supervisors. Paper One has been published on-line by Taylor and Francis in the peer reviewed *International Journal of Inclusive Education* (IJIE). The details are as shown below:

> Fatema Taj Johora, Marilyn Fleer & Nikolai Veresov (2019): Inclusion of a child with expressive language difficulties in a mainstream Australian preschool – roundabout ways can create opportunities for participation, *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, DOI:10.1080/13603116.2019.1609100
>
> Link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1609100

Please note the paper used **Chicago author-date system** for citation and referencing according to the journal requirement. Paper One is attached next as it was published online.

Paper One

International Journal of Inclusive Education

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Inclusion of a child with expressive language difficulties in a mainstream Australian preschool – roundabout ways can create opportunities for participation

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Inclusion of a child with expressive language difficulties in a mainstream Australian preschool – roundabout ways can create opportunities for participation

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ABSTRACT
Contemporary educational policies both at international and national levels acknowledge the educational rights of all children and their inclusion in mainstream educational practices. Like other children at risk, children with disabilities have opportunities to access mainstream education but their participation is not always realised in practice. To address opportunities and challenges of inclusion of children with disabilities, this paper examines the participation of one focus child (four years), with Soto's Syndrome, who attends a mainstream Australian preschool setting. Guided by the cultural-historical theory, digital video data of the focus child's activities in everyday preschool practices (13 h) was gathered over a period of eight months. The findings suggest that although the focus child faces difficulties in expressive language, she created her own developmental trajectory of participation. The focus child used educators as her living auxiliary tools and educators used auxiliary questions to support the child to express and communicate through a process of building shared meaning. Though the findings are limited in regard to generalisation, the understanding about the dialectical effort of adults and the focus child to create a roundabout way to overcome incongruences could be a strong basis for conceptualising inclusion.

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Introduction

Internationally, the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO 1994) inspired policymakers to revisit education policy to ensure equity through the inclusion of all excluded and at-risk groups of children in mainstream educational settings. At the edge of the 25-year celebration of the Framework, the literature suggests inclusive practice in educational settings requires further rethinking and research-based guidelines (Azorín and Ainscow 2018; Cologon 2014). Inclusive education is about creating opportunities for all children's participation in mainstream settings regardless of their physical, psychological, social and cultural diversities. In Australia, the early childhood education policies also appear to value diversity and inclusive practice (Early Years Learning Framework for Australia 2009). However, the success of inclusive

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education in Australia is questioned, as the placement of students with special needs in segregated settings is increasing despite the government's commitment to inclusive education (Anderson and Boyle 2015). Moreover, the participation of children with disabilities in preschool settings is poorly researched (Law et al. 2012).

This paper focuses on the participation of one focus child with a disability. Research into understanding beliefs about disability has shown that views and practices are influenced mostly by two models: the medical model and the social model (Bøttcher and Dammeyer 2012; Durell 2014). The belief system underpinning the medical model considers the child's biological impairments as the cause of disabilities (Allan, Brown, and Riddell 1998; Valle and Connor 2011), whereas the social model views that the social and cultural context is the barrier for inclusion (Oliver 2013). These two models shape education policies and practices and consequently act as an important backdrop to the study reported in this paper. In contrast, drawing upon Vygotsky's cultural-historical concepts to understand child development and disability, this paper presents the findings of a study that examined the process of participation of a preschool child with Soto's syndrome, a genetic disorder that presents itself in the form of difficulty with expression and communication.

In summary, this paper seeks to show how the preschool practice and the focus child both try to overcome secondary disability and to create possibilities for participation in roundabout ways. The paper begins with a detailed presentation of Vygotsky's approach to disability, followed by the study design, the findings and then the conclusion.

Roundabout (alternative) ways of development

In this paper, we conceptualise disability from a cultural-historical theoretical framework. A cultural-historical approach to disability foregrounds the concept of alternative or roundabout ways of conceptualising the process of a child's development. Core to this conceptualisation is a focus on understanding what might be the catalyst for a child's development. The focus is on identifying how a child moves forward in their development, captured through the cultural-historical concepts of drama, contradiction or crisis. The former are related to the activity setting, whilst the latter term of crisis is centred on cultural periods of development tied to institutions.

According to Vygotsky (1993), there are two kinds of disabilities – primary disability and secondary disability. Primary disability is the biological impairment and secondary disability is caused by the limited opportunities to participate in social interactions for a child with a biological impairment. As a result of the primary disability, a child may need an alternative pathway and auxiliary tools in order to successfully participate in activity settings. For example, a child with a visual impairment may use other senses (e.g. touch) to actively participate in everyday practices. A secondary disability is a term used by Vygotsky to capture the idea of how societal practice may hinder a child's participation in everyday practices. For instance, the child with secondary disabilities faces 'the social pressure … to adapt to those circumstances created and compounded for the normal human type [*sic*]' (Vygotsky 1993, 36). The way to overcome secondary disabilities is to facilitate a child's participation through creating alternative pathways or creating social conditions which support multiple ways of participating (Vygotsky 1993).

Vygotsky argued that the social environment is the source of the development of higher mental functions in human beings. The higher mental function appears as social relations and later embedded in the psychological structure of the child. According to Vygotsky (1997, 105–106),

> Every higher mental function was external because it was social before it became an internal, strictly mental function; it was formerly a social relation of two people. … Genetically, social relations, real relations of people, stand behind all the higher mental functions and their relations.

Vygotsky explained that human beings organise and understand their world by using different cultural and psychological tools and signs (e.g. language, different number systems). He argued that from the moment of birth, the baby's environment is not only the physical one, but also the sociocultural environment as she/he acts with different cultural objects (e.g. toys), interacts with other people and gradually is introduced to various cultural signs and tools.

Most of the cultural signs and tools are designed for people without disabilities, and who are the social majority. Consequently, individuals with disabilities face difficulties in using those signs and tools. However, this does not mean that a child with a biological impairment is developmentally impaired (Vygotsky 1993). Therefore, the child with biological impairment faces social disability when society demands that the child use the same psychological tools as the majority of people in the society. As mentioned earlier, development is the transformation of the social functions towards individual mental functions – a process mediated by cultural and psychological tools. The developmental impairment occurs when a child with a biological disability cannot use cultural or psychological tools and as a consequence cannot participate in social interactions. In Vygotsky's (1983, 28–29) words, the cultural development of children with disabilities is interrupted because of:

> … the incongruence between his [child with disabilities] psychological structure and the structure of cultural forms. What remains is the necessity of creating special cultural tools suitable to the psychological structure of such a child, or of mastering common cultural forms with the help of special pedagogical methods, because the most important and decisive condition of cultural development – precisely the ability to use psychological tools – is preserved in such children, Their cultural development might go [in a] different way, it is in principle, entirely possible.[1]

For example, a child with a visual impairment may face difficulties in using the usual written form of language. However, if we can provide an alternative psychological tool (e.g. Braille for children with visual impairment) and alternative strategies to master the tools, such a child will be functionally like other children. According to Vygotsky (1993, 34), when a child with a disability achieves the same level of development as a typical child, the child with disability achieves that '*in another way, by another course, by other means* (italics in original). Therefore, for the pedagogue, it is particularly important to know the uniqueness of the course, along which he [*sic*] must lead the child'.

It is crucial to notice that Vygotsky emphasised the importance of knowing the unique course of development of a child with disability. Bøttcher and Dammeyer (2012) found that a child with cerebral palsy, who struggled to communicate using Rolltalk (an assistive device for communication) at a special preschool setting, could successfully perform at

home using the same Rolltalk. In the special school, the teacher failed to understand the unique eye-hand coordination of the child. Due to poor neck control, the child was facing difficulties in seeing the Rolltalk screen when the teacher was placing it in front of him. In contrast to school, considering the unique visual field of the child, the mother placed the Rolltalk at an appropriate angle rather than placing it straight in front of him. However, Fleer and March (2015) found when carefully created conditions in the home and the mainstream preschool were congruent, this positively changed the pedagogical compass in science-learning for a child with visual impairment. These examples indicate that Vygotsky's arguments about alternative ways of developing continue to have strong implications for contemporary research into the development of children with disabilities. However, only a few researchers have used a cultural-historical conception of primary and secondary disability to guide their studies. Instead, as argued by Granlund (2013), most of the studies on children with disabilities focus on attendance or frequency of participation rather than the involvement or engagement dimension of participation.

'Participation is a multidimensional construct' (Granlund 2013, 470). Participation can be understood from superficial physical action to in-depth psychological involvement. Relevant to the context of this study, is the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (2009, 7) which emphasises a child's sense of '*belonging, being and becoming* [italics in original]' as central for the process of participation. In drawing upon a cultural-historical concept of development we seek to capture a child's participation through social interaction as part of their everyday context of an early childhood setting. Our research questions, introduced in the next section, focus on this holistic conception of participation.

Vygotsky (1993) argued that educators need to lead the child with disabilities towards his/her unique path of development and to provide alternative psychological tools or auxiliary tools so that they can access and participate in regular cultural practices. If we cannot provide alternative psychological tools, we need to generate alternative strategies to create a roundabout way so that they can access and participate in cultural practices using existing psychological tools. However, not enough is known about how to create these conditions for children who have biological disabilities and also how the children themselves contribute to their own development through creating their own pathways. The following section presents details of the study design.

Study design

This paper aims to draw attention to the use of alternative psychological tools or a roundabout way in the process of participation of the focus child. As a part of an ongoing research project which aims to examine the participation of children with disabilities in mainstream preschool settings, this paper will answer the following research questions:

(1) What are the mainstream preschool practices that create opportunities for the focus child with a disability to participate?
(2) How does the focus child with disability enact her ways to participate in the mainstream preschool?

In order to answer these research questions, we choose a naturalistic study design.

This qualitative study examined the participation of a child with a disability in a preschool setting and set up a study design based on cultural-historical methodology. In a cultural-historical approach, the researcher views the child as an active partner in the educational setting and tries to understand the child holistically. Vygotsky (1997) argued that the existing research examines the result of a child's development, instead of the dynamic process of that development. He explained that such examination does not inform what might be the psychological constructs that are in the process of developing. In this regard Vygotsky (1997) discussed the concept of actual development and zone of proximal development (ZPD).

A cultural-historical approach advocates studying the child in a natural, lived setting. In our study, data were generated from the everyday setting of the preschool and by paying particular attention to how the child with Soto's syndrome was able to enter into, participate and shape the practice traditions of the setting. We used pseudonyms in the description of the results.

The preschool's everyday setting

The data were collected from a long-day-care centre, which is situated in a suburb of south-east Melbourne, Australia. The centre was organised into a baby and toddler room (0–3 years), and a preschool room (3–5 years). Sixteen children were enrolled in the preschool program (3–5 years) at the beginning of the project. The preschool program had a qualified preschool teacher and two supporting assistants. The centre directors and the placement teachers (preservice) were also involved in the delivery of the preschool program. All staff in the preschool are referred to as educators in this paper.

The focus child, Maliha, was four-years-old and attended the centre for five days a week. She was diagnosed as a child with Soto's syndrome. She had the distinctive facial appearance (e.g. big head, long face, narrow chin, flat nose), seizures, expressive language difficulties; which are common features of this genetic disorder (Lane, Milne, and Freeth 2016; Leventopoulos et al. 2009). Maliha lived with her parents and elder sister. The family's cultural background was of Vietnamese heritage living in Australia.

Video observation

Video observation and video interview methods were adopted in this study, alongside a collection of photographs, documents and field notes. This study is a part of a bigger research project and video observation for the whole research project was conducted over an eight-month period. The video observation and video interviews were guided by a cultural-historical approach. In this approach, the process of digital data collection is organised to include the researcher, she is not withdrawn from social interactions (Fleer 2014). Specifically, the first author entered into the preschool setting as a participant observer and without taking the educator's role, she interacted with the adults and children in the setting. The interactions occurred through video recording in the context of everyday preschool practices situation, and being a part of the everyday practices of the centre following the focus child. The details procedures are as follows:

(1) Researcher in Everyday Practice Procedures: The researcher took time prior to video recording to be with the children and staff as part of building a researcher-research context relationship. Field notes were used to document the context, roles, routines and procedures, alongside of the relationship building process. The first named researcher initially observed the preschool setting informally to understand the practice context and to plan the formal data collection. This procedure also helped the researcher to develop a rapport with the children and adults.
(2) Video Observation Procedure: A handheld video camera was used to capture Maliha's participation in different activity settings at different times and on different days in the preschool. This meant staying in close proximity to Maliah, video recording play periods, organised learning activities, and snack and meal times. Based on different activity settings and interaction between the focus child and others, the length of the digital observation varied.
(3) Authenticity of Data: All video recordings of activity settings were logged in relation to the position of the researcher at that moment of recording. For example, when the child asked for help from the researcher, or interactions between focus child and researcher they were documented. Data were also viewed by the research team in relation to analysis frame (discussed further below). Data interpretation was also discussed the broader research community (e.g. review panel, academics and research students) for credibility check (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana 2014).

A total of 13 h of digital video data were collected on the focus child.

Video interview

The preschool teacher and other educators were interviewed to understand the context and for further inquiry into the data. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in the centre and video-recorded. The minimum duration was 12 min and the maximum was 32 min for each interview. The first author interviewed educators during and after the observation period to gather more information about the child and the preschool practices.

Data analysis

Similar to many qualitative research practices, data collection and data analysis coincided (Charmaz 2006). Based on Hedegaard's (2008) three levels of analysis, first, all video recordings were watched and the first impression or common-sense interpretation was recorded in the video logs. Second, short video clips were created where the researcher looked for the patterns and relationships in the data in order to understand the practice setting and Maliha's participation in the settings. Third, data were analysed by drawing upon the theoretical understanding of the development of children with a disability, as discussed in Volume 2 of the *Collected Works* (Vygotsky 1993) and as briefly outlined above.

A summary of the data gathered and information about participants is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Brief information on participants and data presentation.

Participants	Pseudonyms	Refers to
Participants who are presented in this paper	Maliha	Focus child
	Monica	Preschool teacher (Bachelor Honours)
	Amanda	Teaching assistant (Diploma)
	Jane	Centre director (Diploma)
	Sonia	Placement teacher (Studying Bachelor Honours)
	Mini, Matte, Ugo, and Mona	Maliah's peers
Vignette	**Number**	**Duration of activity settings (In minutes)**
I) '…' refers to prolonged sound or pause between two sounds For example, *Maliha: Aaaii Gaa … bee* Here, before uttering the sound 'bee' Maliha prolonged 'Gaa' sound.	1	Breakfast (20)
	2	Lunch (30)
	3	Circle time (10)
	4	Teacher lead activity (31)
	5	Outdoor free play (21)
	6	Outdoor free play (55)
II) '[ ]' referes to additional information or grammar correction		

Findings

The data showed Maliha spontaneously participating in the different activity settings in the centre. She was welcomed and accepted by the educators and other children in the centre. In our observations, we found Maliha had not experienced any kind of teasing behaviour from peers and educators. In teacher interviews, peer acceptance for children with disabilities was confirmed. Maliha followed the educators' instructions and did not hit or push any peers. As Maliha's pronunciations of some words were not clear enough, educators struggled to understand her sometimes. She sometimes stuttered and had to repeat words and sounds during her communications or she appeared to struggle to find appropriate words to express herself. Educators mostly tried to support the conversations, and typical everyday communications appeared not to be affected, even though she was challenged by her speech. This study also found Maliha's speech difficulties did not hinder her interaction with peers and her play with peers. However, this study found Maliha struggled to share her experiences with educators in some circumstances. Based on a cultural-historical theoretical conception of participation, we analysed Maliha's participation in different activity settings (e.g. play, peer interaction, adult interaction). Specifically, this paper presents the data focusing on barriers to participation (Black-Hawkins 2010) and how these were addressed in the process of her participation in the preschool.

Drawing upon the patterns of interactions between the focus child and the preschool environment, we classified the findings into five categories in relation to the nature of the activity settings and types of mediating tools used in interactions – (1) everyday routine with concrete tools, (2) group activity with semi-abstract tools, (3) shared context and abstract tool, (4) experience-sharing with the imaginary tool, and (5) experience sharing with abstract tools. These categories are conceptualised as Maliha's participation in the preschool setting and are later discussed in relation to the developmental opportunities available to her.

Everyday routine with concrete tools

Maliha did not face many challenges to interact and participate in everyday routine activities (e.g. mealtime, playtime, circle time) as both the educators and Maliha had shared understandings about the context of everyday practices. Moreover, the concrete materials (e.g. serving tray, fruit, jug, water bottle, toys) were being used as mediating tools by adults and Maliha. According to the *English Oxford Living Dictionaries* (2018), one of the meanings of 'concrete' is something that exists in material or physical form. In the first example, we can see that Maliha attempts to communicate as part of the everyday routine in the centre. This typical example is illustrative of routine interactions with the educators in her preschool.

Vignette 1: At breakfast time when the bread platter was finished at the table, Maliha took the initiative to ask for more. Maliha held the tray up and was saying 'More … more'. Jane (centre director) added 'please'.

Thus, Maliha successfully communicated with educators about her needs because she and the educators were familiar with the context of the breakfast setting and there were many concrete cultural tools to use for the communication. Maliha used the empty serving plate to mean she wanted bread and pointed to the real pieces of fruit rather than verbally informing her choice. The next example is a typical interaction that is contextually based, but where the objects Maliha wanted are not available to point to.

Vignette 2: It was lunch time and there were garlic bread, fish fingers, chicken nuggets, potato chips, vegetable rolls etc. Around Maliha some children were served garlic bread and she intended to have garlic bread. She was trying to say something while her mouth was full-

Maliha: Aaaii Gaa … bee.
Amanda: Sorry, what do you want Maliha?
Maliha: Gai … k be … eed [bread].
Amanda: Garlic bread! [And brings a piece of garlic bread].
Amanda: Here you go sweetheart.

Amanda (teacher assistant) could not understand her pronunciation at first. However, on the second attempt the word 'Be … eed [bread]' gave a clue within that context which helped the educator to understand that Maliha was asking for garlic bread. Amanda also uttered the word to herself, in order to understand Maliha's wording. Here the context of lunchtime and a piece of bread (as Amanda had served to few children a moment earlier) were used as mediating tools by the educator to understand Maliha and, in turn, Maliha used the resources of the context to fully participate in the activity setting of mealtimes in the preschool. Similarly, in Vignette 3 in the next section we will notice how semi-abstract material (e.g. picture, gesture) were used in the interactions between the focus child and the educators.

Group activity with semi-abstract tools

Here we present Maliha's participation in the group activity (e.g. circle time). Maliha's speech difficulties did not create any incongruence as the semi-abstract materials, such as picture cards and gestures, were used as the mediating tools by the adult and the focus child to reach shared meaning. Semi-abstract mediating tools can be defined as

something not in real or material form but also not abstract. For example, picture, text, symbols can be described as semi-abstract mediating tools when those are used by individuals to mediate interactions.

Vignette 3:	Centre director Jane was showing a picture card to children and asking the name of the animals in circle time. Maliha participated.
Jane:	What Lion says?
Children:	Roaar … [Maliha also said Roaarr].
Mini:	Raaaa.
Jane:	Okay. Mini … What is this [showing a new picture card]? Mona [asking to another child]?
Maliha:	A fish [Clapped her hand].
Matte:	A goldfish.
Jane:	What is this, Ugo? Ugo … what is this?
Ugo:	Fish.
Jane:	Oh ya, how fish go? [Maliha was showing hand gesture].
Jane:	Yaa, Maliha knows. Fishes go up and down ….

Shared context and abstract tools

Maliha's conversation with the teacher, Monica, occurred in a shared context and using an abstract tool (verbal language). As Monica created an imaginary situation (travelling in a spaceship) and their conversation was about that particular situation, both of them were aware of the context. They used verbal language, which does not have a material or physical form, to mediate their communication but they did not face any challenges to understanding each other.

Vignette 4:	Monica set up an imaginary spaceship (a cube shape silver colour tent) indoors and children were going into it and Monica was asking them what they could see from their spaceship?
Maliha:	I saw sta-ar [prolonged].
Monica:	You saw[a] star!?
Maliha:	Yes.
Monica:	Really?! [Have] you seen stars? Yeah? [Did] you saw [see] big stars [or] little stars?
Maliha:	… ig[big] stars (also show with hands) …. Mummy and daddy (continued to show with hand gestures).
Monica:	You saw [a] mummy and daddy one?

Moreover, here Monica was asking questions with choices, which also supported their conversation. In the following vignettes, this kind of supportive questioning is also evident.

Experience sharing with imaginary tool

Maliha faced challenges to share her experiences when educators were not very aware of the context and there were fewer concrete objects to use as a mediating tool for their communication. In Vignette 5, Maliha was trying to share her story about her grandma's funeral using imaginary tools, bearing different meanings for the original material. For

example, using mulch and bark to mean fire-cracker and using a sand-filled cooking pot to represent food in the following vignette:

Vignette 5, Part 1:
Very recently Maliha's grandma passed away. Tonight Maliha's family are going to the temple for the ritual. Today Maliha tries to share the story with educators. Maliha was carrying a plastic tub containing mulch and bark, and she placed the tub on the ground near the boundary fence. Two placement teachers [PT] were around her. One of them was playing with two other children and Maliha approached another placement teacher, Sonia, and their conversation was as follows:
Maliha:
My fire (indicating the tub).Sonia:
Your fire?!Maliha:
[ran towards the plastic tub again] Look … [Then approaching the sand pit].Sonia:
Do you want some more [sand]?Maliha:
Grandma ….A fireworks ….
After collecting some sand into a cooking pot she kept it beside the plastic tub. Then Maliha ran towards (passing the placement teacher with whom she was speaking) another end of the outdoor play area to call Jane, the centre director.

It is possible that Maliha might understand that she could not convey her story to the placement teacher. Instead of asking the placement teacher she now chose Jane to share her story. The placement teacher might not know the story of Maliha's grandma. However, the teacher (Monica) and centre director (Jane) knew about the death of Maliha's grandma and family context. The second part of Vignette 5, describes the interaction between Maliha and Jane:

Vignette 5, Part 2:	Maliha brings Jane to the place where she kept the plastic tub and now there is a small cooking pot beside the tub.
Jane:	[Curiously] oh what is that?
Maliha:	Firework.
Jane:	What's this? Firework?! Okay … we [are] having it tomorrow … fireworks in our temple. Because we [are] having a special day 'Diwali' … . I [will] buy something for you today too … yaa? … to celebrate Diwali tomorrow.
Monica:	Sparkles?! [Monica, the teacher, was around and joined in the conversation].
Jane:	Oh yeah Diwali tomorrow … yeaah tomorrow … we celebrate Diwali in our home. She [Maliha] gives me all of that firecrackers.
Monica:	Oh yaa, the firecrackers. They will have [a] firecracker tonight.
Jane:	This one [asking to Maliha, pointing the cooking pot] for me too? Okay … and what's this?
Maliha:	Some food.
Jane:	Thank you Maliha … such a nice girl [hugging].

We can see Maliha again failed to share her story. The story could conclude here and get lost under the misinterpreted story. However, the researcher's (R's) question created a turning point and the conversation continued between Maliha and the adults.

R:	All for Jane?!
Jane:	Yeah … is all for me?
Maliha:	For … for … for.

Jane: For?
Monica: Or, is that for tonight?
Jane: No … is for Jane?! or for … everyone?
Maliha: Temple.
Jane: Haah! … [Jane could not understand].
Maliha: [Whispered to Jane] Tem-ple [temple].
Jane: Grandma ['s] temple or me [my]?

When Maliha answered [the food for] 'Temple', it again created a new opportunity for the successful interaction between the child and adults. The following conversation shows that the educator finally understood what Maliha wanted to say.

Jane: Okay that's for her temple Monica … Today … because they are going temple today … yeah, yeah.
[Maliha was clapping her hands.]
[Jane requested Maliha to tell the researcher what happened to her grandmother.]
Maliha: Grandma fell down on the bed and … [thinking for words].
Jane: [Was prompting] and after that … [waiting for Maliha's response].
Maliha: … [It seems Maliha was thinking for words].
Jane: And after that? She … [Jane prompting].
Maliha: … [Maliha did not say any word though she opened her mouth].
Jane: Pa … paa … passed away.

Maliha brought her emotional experience to the centre. In her free play, she made an imaginary situation and wanted to share her grandma's story with the teacher. She tried to convey the story to the placement teacher and expand it further in the imaginary play situation she had created. She again searched for someone to share her story. We do not know why she chose Jane, while the placement teacher was in closer proximity to Maliha than Jane. It is possible that Maliha might be analysing the social situation and choosing a better option for herself. Here we can say that Maliha considered adults as her auxiliary tools – living auxiliary tools.

Both the child's initiative and persistence, as well as adults' patience and respect for her responses, make the communication possible. If we look at this with the cultural-historical theoretical lens, we can say that both the child and teachers tried to find roundabout or alternative pathways to reach a mutual understanding of the story. Death of a family member might be a new experience for Maliha and the loss of a loved one was a crisis in her life. Her strong emotional attachment may promote her persistence in this bumpy road of communication. The next example is also about Maliha's experience of sharing her story, but the adults were not aware of the context.

Experience sharing and abstract tools

This was the most challenging interaction category. Similar to the previous vignette, Maliha's persistence in sharing her emotional experience is also evident in Vignette 6.

Vignette 6: Last night, Maliha went to enjoy theatre show Lion King. She wanted to share this with the researcher but the researcher could not understand. Then, Maliha chose to approach the educator, Amanda. Here is the brief description of how the communication went. The time is according to the movie file.

22:	20: Maliha: This is so much fun … [She added something more, but the researcher could not understand], my sister … [She was jumping in joy] … a dad die [bending body she was playing the role of 'die'].
Researcher:	Who die[s]?
Maliha:	Son of lioking [Lionking] … pay ticket … [she clapped].
Researcher:	Oh tickets … ! [The researcher could not understand].
23:	26: Maliha approached Amanda to tell her story.
Amanda:	Let me change my jacket …. [Maliha was waiting for Amanda at the door.]
26:	40: Amanda sits down to listen to Maliha.
26:	57: Amanda gave attention to other children riding on a bike. Maliha was following Amanda.
27:	55: Maliha, patting on Amanda's hand, said 'Awa awa awa' but another child wanted help from Amanda to tie his shoelace.
28:	18: Maliha again touched Amanda but another child comes to complain. Amanda had to chase the child as the child was chasing his peer. Maliha was following her.

However, Amanda was distracted from the conversation as she was gradually being involved in ensuring no fighting, discussion with other educators and, finally, riding on a tricycle.

35:	37: Maliha was stopping Amanda's tricycle by widening her hands.
37:	40: Amanda apologises to Maliha for not giving attention to her.
38:	30: While Maliha was taking time to say something, another child tries to get Amanda's attention. Amanda indicated the other child 'ssh'.
39:	25: The child could not wait anymore and distracted Amanda.
40:	50: Amanda was listening to Maliha. Suddenly another child came in between them. Amanda said, 'hang on … Maliha was talking, honey'.
41:	10: Amanda got the clue from Maliha's phrase 'lion king'.
Amanda:	Was that real people or cartoon one?
41:	30: Amanda was sharing Maliha's experience excitedly with another educator and she informed Amanda that yesterday Maliha was picked up early. Finally, it helped educators and the researcher to understand that Maliha went to watch the Lion King (theatre version) last night.

The above observation of a conversation took 19 min 10 s for Maliha to share her experience (enjoying the *Lion King* production last night with family and having so much fun). Moreover, in using the metaphor of a rocky road (see Figure 1), the journey was not completed by following a straight path, as there were some blocks caused through her biological condition, as well as the social conditions embedded in the practice tradition of the preschool. However, Maliha and the educator ended up with successful communication. In our analysis, we examined the above scenario using the unique concept of a roundabout or an alternative way of development for children with disabilities (Vygotsky 1993).

Figure 1 shows that just before the sharing experience, Maliha was in a *Relatively Stable Moment* (RSM), A and the possible behavioural and psychological goal was to share her story meaningfully and reach another Relatively Stable Moment, B. The term *Relatively Stabled Moment* coined to describe the significant moment of the experience sharing by the focus child Maliha. Before and after sharing her experience, Maliha's emotional expression was stable compared to her emotional expression during the experience

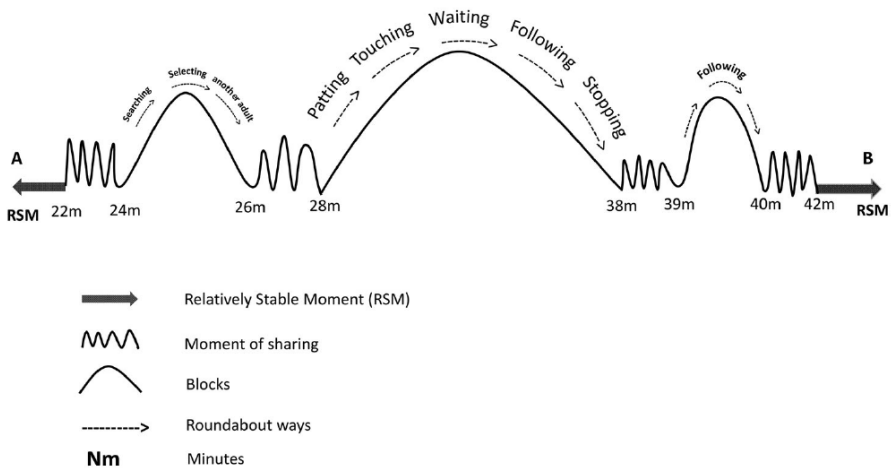

Figure 1. Maliha's roundabout ways to reach the goal of verbal communication.

sharing. However, human mind is active and not fully observable. Therefore, the stability of emotion can be only described in relativity. After starting her journey, Maliha faced her first crisis when the researcher's response showed she could not understand what Maliha was trying to say. Maliha scanned the environment and chose Amanda to share her story. Thus, Maliha created a roundabout way to reach the point of B. In this new pathway, she faced the crisis of not getting enough opportunity and attention to communicate with Amanda. Both the child's biological and social conditions again created a huge barrier. Her fragile expressive language (biological) and educators' priority to respond to different demands at that particular moment, was determined by social expectations to respond quickly to situations. For example, the teacher chose to respond to the visible risk of violence or the risk of getting hurt – a social demand too. It can be argued that limited numbers of educators or limited knowledge or professional skills to deal with the psychological crisis of an individual child's demand, is an outcome of institutional and social practice in many preschool settings, and these practices can create a social barrier for children with expressive language challenges.

Despite her biological limitation in expressive language, Maliha was persistent towards reaching her goal. She continuously searched for opportunities and tried different strategies to overcome the social barriers she faced. For example, she kept following Amanda, waiting until Amanda finished a task, trying to touch, pat in order to seek her attention. Maliha's expressions are in line with Adams and Fleer's (2016) finding that even from a very young age children try to find strategies in complex relationships to ensure their inclusion in the environment. Thus, Maliha took another, roundabout way to reach her goal. However, it would not be possible for Maliha to reach her goal unless Amanda gave her time, attention and asked questions in particular ways, which together acted as auxiliary tools for understanding her story. For example, 'was that real people one or cartoon one?' – Such questions, providing options or words to choose, played an auxiliary role for Maliha and the educator.

What was the driving force for Maliha to be persistent in reaching her goal? Her 'perezhivanie' (Vygotsky 1994) – her emotional experiences with what she had experienced

that night at the theatre, and which worked as a driving force for sharing her story and being persistent. The dramatic experience of going to the theatre, buying a ticket, experiencing the drama on stage, was so valuable in her life that she did not give up or withdraw from sharing her story. Maliha was sharing the phrases – 'my sister'; 'dad died'; 'pay ticket'; 'It so much fun' – which indicate her emotional engagement with the theatre experience.

Analysing all the examples, we summarise the key points in Table 2, which shows in different activity settings how the preschool practices (column 3) and the focus child (column 4) both tried to fulfil the purpose of communication, as well as foregrounding what kinds of materials they used as auxiliary tools:

In the process of participation of the focus child, we can see how the use of different materials and signs act as mediating tools from Vignette 1 to Vignette 6, and facilitate Maliha's interaction in the social situations. A hierarchical relationship among the categories is also evident. The relational hierarchy can be described as simple to complex, familiar to unfamiliar, concrete to abstract, usual to alternative, and regular tools to auxiliary tools. In the case of Vignette 1 to Vignette 3, both Maliha and the adults used materials

Table 2. Participation of Maliha, a unity of the child and preschool practice.

Activity settings	Communication purpose	Conditions created		Tools in use
		In preschool	By Maliha	
Everyday routine with concrete tools				
Breakfast time (Vignette 1)	i) to want more bread ii) to inform her choice about fruit	Facilitated the meal setting The culture of valuing children agencies to ask and to choose	Holding up the plate to get attention strategies to point the fruit pieces directly	Empty plate Pieces of fruits
Lunchtime (Vignette 2)	To want garlic bread	(In addition to above conditions) The educator's effort to understand what Maliha was asking for	Trying to pronounce the words	The piece of garlic bread
Group activity with semi-abstract tools Circle time (Vignette 3)	To response teacher's questions	the circle time practice Provide picture cards Adult-child conversation	Spontaneously answering the quizzes Adding gestures and facial expressions	The picture cards and gestures
Shared context and abstract tool Teacher lead activity (Vignette 4)	To response teacher's questions	Setting up the imaginary situation Encouraging students to play and imagine providing options in questions e.g. "You saw big stars [or] little stars?"	Using gesture with verbal communication	The imaginary spaceship
Experience sharing with imaginary tools				
Outdoor free play (Vignette 5, Part 1)	To share the funeral ritual	The physical environment Child agency to choose her activity and materials Attention from educators	Collecting imaginary material Initiate conversation	Firecrackers and food (Imaginary) (Adult as an auxiliary tool)
(Vignette 5, Part 2)		Supporting the child to express and confirming their understanding Questions with options	choose an adult to share her story Used imaginary materials	
Experience sharing with abstract tools (Vignette 6)	To share the experience of enjoying theatre show	Educator's effort to understand Questions with options	Following the educator Self- regulation Different strategies to grab educator's attention	(Adult as an auxiliary tool)

as auxiliary tools in their communication and their contextual understanding of the regular practice in the centre, in support of their communication. In Vignette 4, the imaginary contextual awareness (as both the teacher and child were imagining the view from a spaceship), questions and gestures created the point of congruence. The presented example shows that the concrete, semi-abstract materials (pic, diagrams) and shared context can be considered as auxiliary tools which were used by the adults and the child to support expression and participation. As a result, no incongruence arose between Maliha's unique pattern of expressive language and the institutional (preschool) practices.

However, incongruences arise when the contextual awareness and auxiliary tools were not available. In Vignettes 5, Maliha collected some materials to create imaginary firecrackers and food before sharing her story of going to the temple for her grandma's funeral ritual. Maliha started to share her story and faced difficulties. However, she was seeking support from adults and four adults were involved in supporting the conversation. Jane and Monica knew that Maliha's grandma passed away, but they were still struggling to understand exactly what Maliha wanted to say. Jane was asking questions with options to help Maliha and checking whether she understood Maliha correctly, while Monica was occasionally providing information to Jane in support of understanding Maliha.

The communication was more difficult in Vignette 6 as the educators did not have any contextual awareness about what Maliha wanted to share, no concrete or imaginary material was available and the educator had to deal with other children's demands. We can notice much distraction in that vignette. Therefore, both Maliha and the adults faced challenges which they tried to overcome. As shown in Figure 1, both Maliha and educator created roundabout ways to reach the goal of successful communication.

Thus, the communication between Maliha and the adults was more challenging when the adults did not have contextual information as well as auxiliary tools to use. However, Maliha chose adults as her auxiliary tool to share her emotional experience, as she was choosing different adult/s to reach her goal. This suggests that the adults played the role of her living auxiliary tool. Analysing the educators' roles we found they were consciously asking her questions with options (see Table 2). Thus, educators were using auxiliary questions to make the communication successful. Therefore, both the focus child and the preschool practices were creating conditions (see Table 2) for participation and development – a dialectical co-construction of the focus child's developmental trajectories.

Holistically, the preschool culture or practices create conditions for Maliha to participate in the setting and for the educators to support the child. First of all, Maliha is welcomed and accepted by the educators and peers, which is a valuable condition for social inclusion (Avramidis, Avgeri, and Strogilos 2018). Moreover, the child has the agency to choose activities and strategies in this preschool. This preschool also has overarching demands that are placed on the children and which create a dialectical relationship (Rainio 2008) between children's freedom to choose activities and controlled behaviour, being a member of the preschool practice. It is evident in the data that Maliha has the freedom to choose activities and tools as well as having resources (both material and psychological) to solve problems. At the same time, Maliha also acts as a responsible member who tries to follow the practised rules of the centre.

In relation to the analytical concept, this study identified the roundabout ways of participation of the focus child as she entered into the practice traditions of her preschool, where living auxiliary tools and auxiliary questioning acted together to create new

developmental conditions for a child with expressive language difficulties. The central finding is that roundabout ways are co-constructed by the dialectical effort of the preschool environment and the focus child.

Implications and conclusion

Referring to the cultural-historical interpretation of disability and development of children with disabilities, this paper investigated the preschool practices and child's own efforts which created opportunities for the focus child's participation. Two key findings emerge from the analysis. First, the findings revealed that none of her biological impairments (e.g. physical features, the risk of seizure) interrupted her participation in the preschool setting except her expressive language difficulties. Though sometimes it was difficult for educators to understand her pronunciation, everyday communications were not as much affected as the interactions usually mediated through concrete objects or semi-abstract material and shared understanding about relevant context. The preschool environment did not focus on Maliha's biological impairment and not try to fix her pronunciation and articulation. Rather the preschool practices were observed to focus on her needs and to create conditions to support Maliha in having genuine access to the preschool activities and in creating pathways for her active participation. The significant incongruences arose at the more abstract level of communication when a concrete or semi-abstract tool was not available in their environment.

The second finding is about how the preschool practices and the focus child both co-construct roundabout ways to overcome incongruences. Maliha chooses adults as her living auxiliary tool and adults supported her by asking auxiliary questions in the process of reaching shared meaning. The dialectical effort of the adults in preschool practices and the focus child generated roundabout ways to create opportunities for Maliha's participation. Here is the detour in developmental pathways that begins with Maliha by creating her own alternative pathway.

A cultural-historical understanding of disability that inspired this study contributes to new understandings of the concepts of living auxiliary tools and auxiliary questions which will be helpful to rethink inclusive practice at the preschool level. Though the findings are limited to one case study, the understanding about a teacher's role to act as a living auxiliary tool and engage in auxiliary questioning strategies is a significant contribution to the literature and is suggestive of new understandings about the participation of children with expressive language difficulties.

Note

1. The original text is translated by the third author, Nikolai Veresov.

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Chapter 6: Understanding the child in relation to preschool practice

Chapter 6: Understanding the child in relation to preschool practice

Paper Two

Outline of Chapter 6

Chapter 6: Understanding the child in relation to preschool practice

Backdrop of Paper Two

Despite their positive attitude towards inclusive education, early childhood educators are hesitant to support children with severe disabilities and children with autism (see Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2014; Lee et al., 2015). Educators often worry about the behaviour of children with autism and how that would affect the whole group or class (see Peters & Forlin, 2013). Among many interventions, Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) is considered as one of the best bases to support children with autism (Fennell & Dillenburger, 2016). Deeper down in the practice, research and interventions are still dominated by the medical model. The difficulties children with autism encounter are often attributed to the child's biologically different development. This paper argues that it is important to understand the child holistically and in relation to the practice where the child participate.

Paper Two reported the findings based on the focus child Toby's (pseudonym) participation in the preschool. Toby was diagnosed as a child with autism. In accumulation, eight hours of video observation data and relevant video interview data were analysed for this paper. This paper presents results related to Research Question 1 and Research Question 2. This paper explained the dialectical interaction between the child's motive and preschool demand and how that created participation possibilities for the focus child with autism.

This paper is co-authored with my supervisors. It has been published online by Elsevier in the peer-reviewed journal, Learning, Culture and Social Interaction. The details are mentioned and a screenshot of published paper is shared below:

> Fatema Taj Johora, Marilyn Fleer & Marie Hammer (2021): Understanding the child in relation to practice and rethinking inclusion: A study of children with autism spectrum disorder in mainstream preschools, *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2020.100469

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Full length article

Understanding the child in relation to practice and rethinking inclusion: A study of children with autism spectrum disorder in mainstream preschools

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ABSTRACT

Despite the growing acceptance of inclusive education policy, effective inclusion of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in mainstream settings has not been ensured. Moreover, the

The preprint of Paper Two is attached next. The title and the content differ to some extent with the published paper though main argument is same.

Paper Two

Understanding the child in relation to practice: Rethinking inclusion of children with autism in mainstream preschools

Abstract

Despite the growing acceptance of inclusive education policy, effective inclusion of children with autism in mainstream settings has not been ensured. Moreover, the research-to-practice gap in the field of autism (Bölte, 2019) is a wakeup call for researchers in rethinking inclusion of children with autism. Grounded in cultural-historical theory, this paper examines the inclusive practices of one child with autism from the child's perspective. Toby (pseudonym) aged 3 years 5 months was observed in the naturalistic setting of a preschool over 8 weeks. A total of 8 hour of digital video data were recorded to understand the practices that support or mitigate the process of both primary and secondary development of a child with autism in a play-based setting. The dynamic relationship between the child's motive and the institutional demands of preschool were analysed in relation to the inclusive practices regarding Toby's development. The findings show how the child's persistent negotiations, the educators' understanding of the child's motive, and the practice setting created conditions that supported Toby's development and pushed against reported 'secondary disability' (Vygotsky, 1993). The findings show a need for rethinking inclusion of children with autism and point to new directions in research for play-based settings.

1. Introduction

Very little is known about the participation of children with autism in preschools (Yee et al., 2017). Many researchers have suggested strategies for educators to increase socially accepted behaviours of children with autism (National Autism Center, 2011; Terpstra, Higgins, & Pierce, 2002). Additionally, studies have been designed to check the effectiveness of particular strategies to facilitate targeted behaviours (Christensen-Sandfort & Whinnery, 2013; Daubert, Hornstein, & Tincani, 2014). Most of the investigations focused on outcome measures or captured a distorted moment of behaviour rather than understanding the child holistically (see Bölte, 2014; Mayes,

Lockridge, & Tierney, 2017; Yee et al., 2017). Moreover, misconceptions about autism and not understanding the perspective of individuals with autism amplify the problem (Bennett, Webster, Goodall, & Rowland, 2018). A renowned scientist with autism mentioned that educators sometimes focus on the disability so much that they forget to facilitate the child's development (Grandin, 2006).

Therefore, how we can better engage children with autism in preschool is a burning question. It is essential to know how the researcher conceptualises the meaning of child development and disability as a first step in answering this question. In contrast to the general understanding of development, Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory conceptualised development as a relational dynamic between the child and her/ his surroundings (Vygotsky, 1998). Moreover, cultural-historical theory criticised the idea of an age-specific developmental standard or norm and quantitative measurement of a child's development (Vygotsky, 1997). As a result, cultural-historical approaches place emphasis on understanding the child's perspective as part of a child's everyday participation in the different institutional environments s/he attends Hedegaard (2008a). Hedegaard's (2012, 2014) conception of development includes the child's ability to negotiate different institutional demands and to study how the child place demands upon the institutional practices through their motive-oriented actions.

Drawing upon cultural-historical theory, this study examines the participation of a child with autism in a mainstream preschool setting. This investigation aimed to study mainstream preschool practices in relation to the developmental opportunities for the focus child with autism, at the same time as researching how the child enters and participates in these practices. To achieve the goals of the study, we introduce in the next section the cultural-historical concepts of motives and demands in relation to a child's participation in an everyday context.

2. Cultural-historical theory of child development and disability

According to Vygotsky (1998), a child's social environment does not only act as an influencing factor but is also the source of a child's development. It is not enough to merely analyse a child's actions or behaviour to understand the child's development. Instead, Vygotsky (1998) stressed that we need to understand the child's relationship with his/her surrounding environment in order to understand the child's development. The moment a child is born into this world, along with their biological development, her/his cultural development begins through his/her interaction with others (Vygotsky, 1997).

Vygotsky (1993) explained that a child's biological line of development and the cultural line of development are fused in typical circumstances. However, for a child with disability, the incongruence between a child's biological line of development and cultural line of development is problematic (Vygotsky, 1993). He said biological differences of children with disabilities are conceptualised as a 'primary disability' (e.g., sensory impairment, cerebral palsy, autism). Children with disabilities face difficulties in using cultural or psychological tools for social interactions because of these biological differences. Since social participation is the source of cultural development, children with disabilities experience difficulties in their cultural line of development. Vygotsky (1993) coined the term 'secondary disability' to refer to the social consequences of the child's primary disability.

Additional explanation of Vygotsky's concepts on disability and development using examples may be helpful. Human civilisation developed many artefacts and cultural or psychological tools (e.g., number system, language) in order to interact and to control their acts (Vygotsky, 1997). A child gradually masters the use of the artefacts and cultural tools; and their biological, psychological and cultural development are

fused. However, Vygotsky (1993) explained that the central problem for the development of children with disabilities is 'the incongruence between his [*sic*] psychological structure and the structure of cultural forms' (p. 47). For example, a child who cannot hear sounds because of a biological problem cannot access the oral language and faces challenges to communicate with others who use oral languages. Vygotsky (1993) argued that such a child's psychological ability to communicate is not impaired, but they can communicate in a different way using different or unique psychological tools. As evidence, a child with hearing impairment can communicate using sign language, and a child with visual impairment can read and write using the Braille system. The renowned scientist, Temple Grandin, an individual with autism, described, 'For me to think, I have to create pictures in my imagination'(Grandin, 2006, p. 229). Therefore, Vygotsky (1993) claimed that it is possible to provide opportunities for the development of children with disabilities by creating a roundabout or alternative way. Bøttcher (2018) suggested how, using alternative communication tools and following the child's motive, educators engaged a child with severe cerebral palsy in shared activities.

Based on the cultural-historical theory, this study explored the focus child's participation in a mainstream preschool from *a wholistic perspective* (Edwards, Fleer & Bøttcher, 2019). The child's participation is analysed using the concept of *motive* and *demand* (Hedegaard, 2014).

3. The child's motive and preschool's demand

A child participates in different institutions (e.g., families, preschools, schools, playcentres) and faces different demands (Hedegaard, 2019). The institutional demands are overarched by the social and political cultures. This study examined a child's

participation in a preschool setting, and the preschool demands that the child experienced. Not only do institutions put demands on a child but also the child places demands on the institution, as can be identified when we study how a child enters into, participates in and shapes the activity setting through their activities. The child is an active participant in her/his environment and his/her need, will or intention matters in the participation, along with institutional demands. Therefore, under the same circumstances and towards the same set of demands, different children behave differently because of the dynamic relationship between the child and her/his social environment (Vygotsky, 1998). While society shapes a child's development through its different institutional practices, at the same time, the child shapes these institutions – we see a dialectical process of becoming. Therefore, this study also examined how the child places demands on others in the preschool. Holistically, the research revealed the negotiations between the child's motives and preschool demands and how that created participation opportunities and developmental possibilities for a child with autism.

The term 'motive' has been defined in many ways in the literature. Hedegaard (2002) defined motive as the 'goals that come to characterise a person's action in different activities over a longer period of time' (p.55). Hedegaard (2012) also stated, 'A child's motive is related to the child's intention in specific situations' (p.134). Fleer (2012) explained motive – 'as something generated through observing or participating in an activity – rather than as something that comes solely from within' (p. 91). A child's motive develops through continuous participation in social activities. Although the motive characterises the individual's action, the child's motive develops through social actions.

A child has different experiences as he/she participates in different activities or social situations in different institutional practices. Therefore, a child will have different

motives and motive orientations and, at the same time, the child will experience different demands in their life. New demands and their associated relations with children develop new motives for a child. If the child's motive does not match with the social demand of the practices in which the child participates, this can create a crisis for the child. Such a crisis can create new developmental possibilities for a child. But 'crisis becomes detrimental if the caregivers do not support the child's capabilities to move to new motive and competencies' (Hedegaard, 2012, p. 137). Therefore, it is essential to consider the child's current motive and competences and to create conditions for realising new motives (Hedegaard, 2002).

In order to understand the complex dynamic of motive and demand, Hedegaard (2012) developed the concept of activity settings, a smaller unit than the concept of institutional practices. Activity settings are different events throughout an institutional practice. 'An activity setting can be compared to a scene in a theatre where both the materiality and the way of interaction reflect the tradition in an institutional practice' (Hedegaard, 2012, p. 131). Analysing the focus child's participation in different activity settings within the preschool was important for understanding both demands and motives.

4. Research Design

This qualitative study followed a cultural-historical methodology for framing the research design. Cultural-historical methodology encourages the examination of the process of development rather than measuring the result of the development. Carrying out Vygotsky's legacy, Hedegaard developed a wholeness approach to better understand the dynamic phenomenon of child development as a process of development. To achieve this, Hedegaard (2008a, 2012) suggested capturing the interrelated social,

institutional and individual perspectives. This study examined the child's participation in different activity settings of a preschool, which are the micro-units of the broader social practices, using video observations and video interview methods.

4.1. Video observation

Video observation is a validated method in cultural-historical theory. As a part of a bigger research project, the researcher and the research assistant collected data over an eight-month period. They followed the focus child using a hand-held camera, and video recorded his participation in different activity settings over eight weeks. In accumulation, eight hours of video data were collected on the focus child, Toby.

4.2.Video interview and documents

The researcher also interviewed the preschool teacher and other educators to better understand the child's action and institutional practices. All interviews were video recorded. In total, four hours of video interview data were collected for the main research project. The interviews were conducted during and after the observation period. Moreover, the researcher collected photos, attendance sheets, some instructional documentation and assessment records and plans.

4.3. Data organisation and analysis

The video data were saved in digital folders according to dates. All video files were coded, and brief details of the data were recorded in a video log. Video data were saved on two external hard drives. The researcher went through the video data many times and created shorter video clips to deal with the files easily during the analysis process. However, the original recording files were preserved without any editing.

The researcher analysed the video data following Hedegaard's (2008b) three levels of analysis. In the first step, considering the research questions, all data were scrutinised

thoroughly and key findings were noted. Second, the researcher explored the recurring patterns and uncovered relationship patterns. In the third level of analysis, the theoretical concepts of motives and demands were used to further analyse the data.

5. The context of the study

The context of the study has been presented through institutional practice, activity setting and the individual child.

5.1. The institutional setting

This study collected data from a mainstream preschool setting (long-day-care centre) situated in a southeast suburb of Melbourne, Australia. This suburb is highly multicultural but low in socioeconomic status (Greater Dandenong, 2019). The day-care centre has two sections: baby and toddler (0-3 years) room and preschool (3-5 years) room. However, children from both rooms shared meal times and outdoor playtimes together. The focus child of this study was from the preschool program. The preschool program had a qualified (Bachelor with honours) preschool teacher and two teaching assistants with Diploma qualification. Moreover, the centre director and placement teachers (Masters degree, Bachelor degree, Diploma, and Certificate III students) were involved in the preschool program.There were 16 to 21 children enrolled in the preschool section during the year of fieldwork. Children from diverse cultural and social backgrounds attended the centre. Children with disabilities were also enrolled in the centre.

5.2. Activity settings

As discussed earlier, the focus child was observed and video recorded in different activity settings of the preschool. Broadly, activities of this preschool can be categorised in two, based on physical settings: indoor activity settings and outdoor activity settings.

Indoor activity settings included circle time, group activity, different free play settings, different meal times, and different child-initiated play. Outdoor activity settings included play in the sandpit, play in the playground, play in the cubby house, gardening, water play, group activity, bike riding, different children initiated plays, and occasional mealtimes. Toby was observed in both indoor and outdoor activity settings.

5.3. The individual

The focus child, Toby, was aged three years and five months. He was diagnosed as a child with autism. Toby was enrolled in the day-care centre with two other siblings just two months before the video observations were started. Therefore, it was a transition period for Toby. It was also his first transition from home to preschool as he had not previously attended any other day-care or preschools. He was the eldest child of his parents among the three siblings. Toby's younger sister was two years and six-months-old and diagnosed with a hearing impairment. His youngest sister was six-months-old.

Toby was eager to participate in different activity settings as well as to play with his peers. He communicated with facial expression and body language. Sometimes he pronounced sounds, but his speech was in the early process of developing. Therefore, both Toby and others sometimes faced communication difficulties. However, Toby was able to comprehend verbal language. Therefore, educators and peers mostly communicated with him verbally.

6. Findings

Overall, the study found that Toby was eager to participate in various activities, including social play with peers. However, sometimes he experienced difficulties in his participation, which could be observed through behaviours that showed emotional distress. Educators were concerned about his behaviours (e.g.; biting, hitting,

screaming) as well as his peers' responses to him. However, a closer study of the demands, motives and activity settings of the preschool, found both Toby and the educators actively created positive conditions and gradually the difficulties appeared to decline, with the exception of a few. We were interested to understand Toby's development within this context.

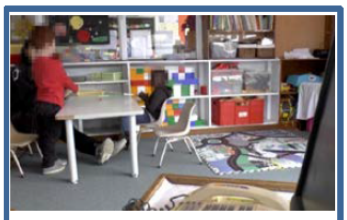
The detailed findings will be elaborated under three themes: 1) understanding the child's perspective, 2) challenges and resolution in participation, 3) creating greater opportunities for participation.

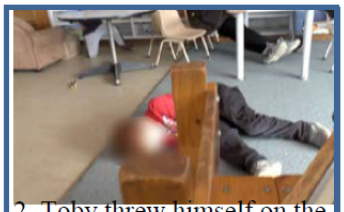
6.1. Understanding the child's perspective

This section presents Toby's participation in two similar preschool activities. However, social interactions were very different in each activity setting. Vignette 1 describes how Toby entered into an activity setting and the social interaction Toby and others experienced.

> Vignette 1: One of the placement teachers, Thi, was facilitating a number and counting game using number mat and Lego blocks. Toby was playing with big Lego blocks. Suddenly, he moved to another table where another placement teacher, Ming, was leading a counting game with Peter using string and beads.
>
> 00:30 Toby grabbed one of the strings, and the other end of the string was held by his peer Peter. Toby was trying to pull the string (see figure 1).
> 00:33 Ming: Now we have [Did not complete the sentence and she was looking at Toby]….
> 00:34 Toby threw himself on the floor and laid down (See figure 1).
> 00:45 Toby turned on his back and held his head up to see Ming and Peter. They were continuing their activity.
> 00:52 Ming (to Peter): Do you like to throw the dice?
> Peter threw the dice, and it fell off the table.
> Ming: Off the table. Throw gently.
> 00:56 Toby got up again and grabbed a toy and went very close to Peter.
> 01:04 Toby poked Peter with the toy.
> Ming: "S-t-o-p" (warned Toby).
> 01:11 Toby again threw himself on the ground and laid down.
> 01:19 Toby got up at sitting position.

01:26 Ming: One, two, three, four. (counting). [Toby crawled on the ground and moved close to another table].
01:30 Ming: five, six, yaa.
01:36-01:45: Toby stood up and stared at Peter. He held his fist upward and then punched in the air (pretended to punch Peter, from a distance; See the third picture in Figure 1).
01:47: Toby walked away and left the kinder room.
Thi and Monica (preschool teacher) brought Toby back to the kinder room. Monica tried to engage Toby in another activity.


1. Toby was pulling the string


2. Toby threw himself on the floor

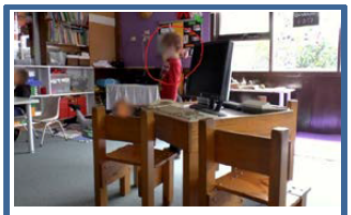

3. Toby held his fist up

Figure 1: Toby's actions when he could not participate in the activity

It seemed the placement teacher was doing a planned activity with Peter. Toby's sudden appearance was a distraction from the ongoing activity as he grabbed the string (at 00.30) without waiting first of all to be given a chance. It flared up as a crisis when Toby fell down (at 00:34) and later poked Peter with the toy (at1:04). His action placed demands on the educator to resolve the tension. In response to Toby's action, the educator placed demands on Toby to stop. The educator tried to continue the activity with Peter. She did not address Toby and it seemed the educator was distracted and confused about facing the crisis that had appeared. The educator shared in an interview,

> I think [that] I can accept them [children with disabilities], [and] I can respect them. I do not know how to help them. It is very hard for me. Sometimes frustrating [*sic*] about myself. Do you know the feeling?
> (Ming, the placement teacher)

Therefore, possibly the educator did not address Toby as she may not have been confident enough to do so. It is not unusual for preservice (placement) teachers to feel a lack of confidence and competence to support children with autism (Barned, Knapp, & Neuharth-

Pritchett, 2011). In contrast, in Vignette 2, the preschool teacher addressed Toby's motive in a similar activity. The following activity took place one month and one week after the previous activity with the placement teacher. When Toby entered into the activity setting, the social interactions were very different from the previous activity.

> Vignette 2: The preschool teacher Monica was leading a counting group activity. She used counting beads, strings and dice. Four children were participating in pairs. Each pair was using one dice and one counting string, which contained two sets of beads in two different colours. Each pair was sitting facing each other and throwing dice. According to the number shown on the dice, they need to drag beads from their counter player. Toby came to the table seeking attention from Monica by touching her (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Toby's gradual participation in the counting activity

> Monica: Do you want to help me Toby? (Monica gave the dice to him).
> Monica: Roll the dice, throw the dice.
> How many? Two.

Monica left her seat for Toby and asked Henry to sit facing him. Toby was trying to grab the dice from Henry. He extended his hand towards Henry and Henry was shouting, 'wait, wait'. As soon as Henry threw the dice, Toby grabbed the dice. Later Toby threw the dice and again took the dice before Henry could pick it up. Toby kept the dice in his hand. Gary (Toby's peer) noticed that.

> Gary: No, … you have to roll the dice!
> Monica: Who?
> Gary: Toby got the dice.

Monica came and was showing Toby how to throw the dice.

> Monica: You have to roll the dice [Monica helped Toby to throw the dice]
> One, two, three.

Henry took the dice and Toby was again extending his hand toward the dice.

> Henry: My turn!

Monica came and held Toby's hand.

Monica: Now it's Henry's turn then your turn.

Henry threw the dice, and the number was five. As soon as Henry rolled the dice, Toby grabbed it.

Monica: Five, Henry. [She moved five beads towards Henry from Toby].

Now it was Toby's turn. He was holding the dice in his hand, and he pushed all his beads towards Henry.
[Monica moved from the table again. Children were engaged in the activity]

Gary: Toby won.
Monica: Did Toby won [*sic*]? Good job Toby [She was clapping and coming towards Toby], Hi-5 [Toby and Monica touched each other's fists].

Similar to Vignette 1, the preschool teacher organised the counting activity for older children in the preschool group. However, in Vignette 2, Toby sought a kind of permission as he was touching Monica to get her attention. In response to Toby's action, she asked, 'Do you want to help me, Toby?' Thus, the preschool teacher accepted his interest positively, and it is evident that she involved him in the activity gradually (see Figure 2). First, Monica involved Toby as an observer and later she left her place for Toby to facilitate his participation as a player in the activity with the other children. It seems that Toby was not familiar about the rules of the activity. Toby's peers were involving themselves to inform Toby about the rules of the activity. For example, they were saying, 'No…..you have to roll the dice!' Although Monica left the activity table, she was keeping an eye on the activity, and she entered into the activity setting from time to time to support Toby. Thus, in Vignette 2, Monica valued the child's motive to participate and created conditions which lead to engagement of the focus child in the activity and created developmental possibilities. She addressed the child's motive to participate in the activity as well as informing the child about the

situational demand (here, the rules of the activity). Moreover, she supported the child to learn the rules of the activity. Therefore, it can be said the crisis was supported for the focus child and others involved in the activity, which then lead to developmental possibilities.

6.2. Crisis and resolution in participation

This section discusses a crisis that emerged for the focus child and the other participants and their way towards resolution. The following Vignette 3 is an example of Toby's emotional crisis and how the crisis was responded to in the preschool practice by others and the focus child himself. Vignette 3 is a part of an outdoor free-play session, and Toby chooses the bike riding activity setting. Vignette 3 presents a 12 mins 14 secs-long video record in two parts.

> Vignette 3, Part A: Toby was after a particular blue ride. The blue ride was unique in its design compared to other bicycles and tricycles in the activity setting. The preschool had only one rider of that particular design. Another child, Mini, was riding on that one.
>
> 25:23 Toby was chasing Mini to get the ride.
> 25:29 One educator was trying to stop him by extending her hand.
> 25:33 Toby started to cry loudly.
> 25:44 He slapped Mini on the back.
> 25:54 Toby started to chase Mini.
> 27:12 Toby took another red tricycle.
> 28:36 Riding the tricycle, Toby came to Amanda. He was crying while pointing to the blue ride.
> 28:40 Amanda: You want the blue bike [*sic*].
> Toby also started to chase the blue ride.
> 28:43 Amanda: Sweetie, you're gonna [*sic*] have to wait. In a minute, honey, take it when you have your turn.
> 28:58 Toby was screaming and slapped Mini on the head.
> 29:06 He was running after Mini holding a doll pram over his head. Toby's attitude was indicating that he could hit Mini with the doll pram he was carrying. Two educators ran behind him from two directions to stop him.

The focus child's motive was to get the blue ride. As the preschool had only one ride (in

that particular design, kids ride swivel car), Toby had to wait for his turn or negotiate with Mini. Waiting for your turn or negotiation with a peer are both options that demand emotion regulation. Instead, Toby was chasing Mini (25:23), which placed demand on the educators, and in response the educators initially placed demand upon Toby to stop his actions. However, from moment to moment Toby was crying (at 25:33), slapping (at 25:44, 28:58) and screaming (at 28:58) at his peer to get the blue ride. He was facing difficulties to regulate his emotions and his desire for the bike. We look at this through Toby's motive and suggest that he may have been negotiating with others to satisfy his motive. It is possible that he tried the negotiation strategies to frighten the girl through slapping and chasing. The other negotiation strategy was communicating his distress by screaming and crying loudly. Toby was also able to initiate communication with educators and to express his need. For example, he initiated a negotiation with Amanda and communicated that he wanted the blue ride through facial expression and pointing to the blue ride. Thus, the focus child's motive-oriented actions placed demands on both educators and peers in that outdoor bike riding activity setting in preschool practice.

The educators also placed their demands towards Toby. As Toby intended to hit Mini, the educators tried to stop him through verbal and behavioural actions. For example, two educators ran behind him to stop his actions (at 29:06). The educators communicated their demand on Toby in different ways. First, they demanded that Toby regulate his behaviour by asking him to stop chasing and slapping Mini. Amanda also informed Toby about the social rule that he needs to wait for his turn. The other strategy of Amanda was emotional support as she was addressing Toby as 'sweetie' and 'honey', speaking kindly (at 28:43). Amanda continued her emotional support, which is presented in Vignette 3, Part B as follows.

Vignette 3 Part B: Continued from Vignette 3 Part A. Toby again started to chase Mini.

29:32 Toby reached Mini and slapped on her back.
Amanda: Toby, no! [loud and prolonged].
Toby stopped and came back to Amanda.
29:41 Amanda held him tight and hugged him.
29:53 Amanda let him go. Toby stopped chasing the girl. Instead, he tried to engage himself doing other things. However, he was keeping an eye on the blue ride.
- Roaming around the playground and sandpit area.
- Sitting on another tricycle and riding the tricycle.
- Playing on the slide.

37:26 He was sitting on the edge of a slide.
37:29 He noticed the unoccupied blue ride. He clapped his hand and approached the blue ride. He hopped up and grabbed the ride.
37:39 Amanda: Yeah! Hi-5. You got it! Yes.

Toby was struggling to regulate his emotion, and he slapped Mini again (at 29:32). In response to Toby's action Amanda wanted him to stop his action using verbal instruction, as she loudly said, 'Toby, no!'. Toby successfully regulated his emotion and waited for his turn for eight minutes (37:39-29:41=7:58) after Amanda's emotional embrace at 29:41. It is notable that Toby was showing his distress through his behaviour, and the crisis was very intense in the first few minutes of Vignette 3. Toby slapped Mini three times as well as he chased, screamed and cried during 4 minutes and 18 seconds (29:41-25:23=4:18). The following figure captures this as a dynamic relationship between the child's motive and preschool demand and the process of creating developmental possibilities.

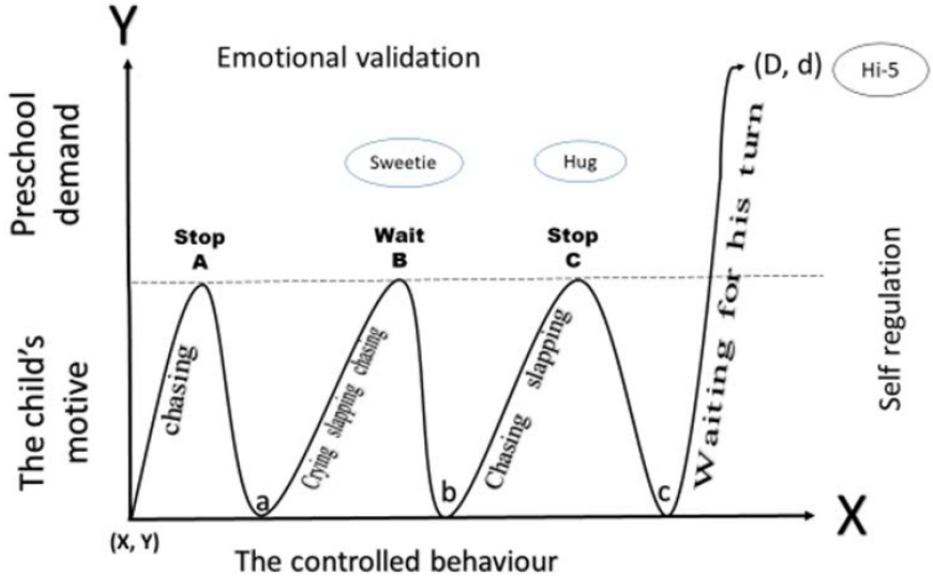


Figure 3: Dynamic negotiation between the child's motive and preschool demand

Figure 3 shows that Toby was chasing and hitting his peer following his motive orientation towards getting access to the blue ride. However, he could not continue his strategies as the educators demanded him to stop his distressing behaviour. Despite the educators' demand, Toby's emotional crisis was ongoing, and he only controlled his behaviour for a short time. Again he burst into tears and showed his distress. Thus, the zigzagging journey of controlling and realising emotional distress was going until the point of 'c' (see Figure 3). Toby's actions until the point 'c' were controlled by the institutional demands, which Toby experienced externally in the activity setting. The controlled behaviour is presented on the X axis in Figure 3. However, Toby's actions towards the point 'D, d' was self-regulated, as the educators were not involved directly. Evidence shows in Vignette 3, Part B, that instead of chasing Mini, Toby involved himself in different activities and was simultaneously keeping an eye on the blue ride.

The educators' responses to his distressing behaviour were consistent and involved messaging him about the institutional demand of turn-taking. It can be explained that the educator was playing a dialectical role. On the one hand, she was emotionally engaged with the child, and on the other hand, she was playing her institutional role by reminding Toby about the turn-taking rule.

Similarly, at the point of C (see Figure 3), she hugged Toby as soon as he stopped his distressing behaviour. Such emotional engagement by the educator probably helped the child to calm himself and to motivate him for waiting until his turn at the end. Although the first four minutes of the Vignette were full of emotional crisis, Toby successfully later regulated his emotion and waited for his turn for a total of eight minutes. The recurrence of the demand on Toby for waiting his turn supported his motive orientation about turn-taking. Therefore, at the point of 'D, d' (see Figure 3) the child's motive and institutional demand were fused together. Moreover, when Toby finally got the blue ride, the educator noticed that and expressed her solidarity with Toby saying, 'You got it! Yes!' Such *emotional validation* by the educator was creating motivational conditions for Toby's orientation to turn-taking motive, both in that particular moment and for future experience. Thus the challenges which appeared at the beginning of the Vignette 3 were resolved through the dynamic negotiation between the child's motive and institutional demand.

Similarly, in Vignette 2 the preschool teacher welcomed Toby positively as she asked, 'Do you want to *help* me? (my emphasis)'. She also gave a hand to Toby to model turn-taking and throwing dice and counting. Moreover, her response to hearing that Toby won reflected (see Vignette 2) her emotional expression as *emotional validation*.

6.3. Secondary disability and restricted opportunity for participation

It is revealed that the focus child was participating in many preschool activities. It is evident that he played an active role to participate in different activity settings and the preschool practices supported him and created conditions which helped the child to address the preschool demands. However, this study also found that sometimes Toby's participation was partially restricted because of the incongruences between Toby's psychological uniqueness and socially available opportunity, which causes secondary disability (Vygotsky, 1993).

The following Vignette 4 presents how differently Toby communicated his motive and waited for the chance offered by the educator. He attended the circle time fully, participated but incongruence restricted greater participation.

> Vignette 4: Jane, centre director, called the children to sit on the mat. Toby sat on mat with his peers. Jane started a conversation on Christmas, and after a while, she was asking children whose name start with letter 'a' and so on. When other children were answering, Toby wanted to say something. He moved and sat on the chair beside Jane. He was patting Jane to get her attention. He was also looking into Jane's face, being very close to her. He once made a sound like 'yeah'. Jane asked, "Yeah"? While Jane was continuing the questioning, Toby once raised his hand high (see picture 1, Figure 4). However, he did not get any response to his hand-raising. He sat quietly but when Gary put his hand up, Toby stood up and put his two hands up (see picture 2, Figure 4). Then, Toby was trying to say something. He said, "ai-ai-aa". However, he did not receive any attention from Jane for his response. He sat back on the chair, and after a while he backed onto mat and sat beside one of his peers.

Figure 4: Toby raising his hand to answer

Toby expressed his motive to participate in a group conversation in Vignette 4. This time his actions were social culture-oriented. He gradually took many steps to communicate his interest to participate in group conversation. Toby changed his sitting position, patted Jane, made verbal sounds and put up his hand and waited for his chance. While he did not get the educator's response, he tried again and communicated further by putting his two hands up (see picture 2, Figure 4). In the circle time, Toby could not therefore participate in the conversation fully, although his participation motive was firm and evident in his actions (see Vignette 4).

Here the educator used only verbal language and body language as the communication medium. Toby could comprehend verbal language and it was found that he followed the educators' verbal instruction in different activities. He was also able to communicate with others with body language. However, the absence of his verbal language was challenging his participation in many ways. For example, sometimes Toby's motive to play was misunderstood by the peers and sometimes Toby and his peers

ended up in conflicting situations. The preschool teacher, Monica, encouraged Toby's peers to play with Toby.

> We say to them (peers), 'Toby does not have the words. So he is trying to get into play and you [should] encourage [him] to play.'
>
> (Monica, The preschool teacher)

Monica also shared how other children were accepting Toby gradually, and they gradually learnt to understand Toby.

> The other week we spotted [that] Toby was hiding in the cushions. And waiting for Henry to come up and then he will go boom to Henry. Then Henry recovers and comes in back again…walked back out, walked back in. Whereas two months ago that would not happen. They would hit each other constantly. They can build up the relationship. Even Henry knows what Toby wants, how is this? - through his eye contact, by taking him…So Henry is now learning.
>
> (Monica, the preschool teacher)

While in some situations body language and situational context can help others to understand Toby, a communication system would create opportunities for higher levels of engagement in preschool activities. In the preschool, he was not receiving any support for alternative forms of communication. The centre director and the preschool teacher both mentioned in interviews some difficulties in obtaining funds to support children's additional needs.

> "But we still did not get any funding for anyone (child with disability) for six months already [*sic*]"
>
> (Jane, Centre director)

In an interview, the preschool teacher also indicated the change in the administrative process of the funding application and its effects on receiving funds on time. Complexity in funding provision and initiatives to reform the system is evident in the literature (Gonski et al., 2018). Thus the social practice of fund allocation and support services impacted the focus child's participation in activity settings of the preschool.

Therefore, not only the preschool but also broader social practices should be considered to create greater participation opportunities for children with disabilities.

Vygotsky's concept of incongruence between the psychological tool and the child's biology was evident in Vignette 4 and staff quotes. The absence of Toby's verbal language was creating secondary social barriers when there was no alternative communication system to use to express his thought. Following Vygotsky's argument, Toby is psychologically capable of communicating but because of his biological difference the culturally available communication system was not useful for him. Thus the social consequences of the biological problem or primary disability created secondary disability for Toby in some situations.

7. Conclusion

Grounded in cultural-historical theory, the study reported in this paper examined the inclusion practices of an Australian mainstream preschool for a child with autism. The overall findings suggest that the child's persistent negotiations in the context of educators' understanding of the child's motive, acted together to create the conditions to support Toby's participation. Despite the growing acceptance of inclusive education policy, effective inclusion of children with autism in mainstream settings continues to be misunderstood (Pellicano, Bölte, & Stahmer, 2018).

What was learned from this study was first, a child's actions in an institution (e.g, preschool) need to to be understood in relation to his/her activity within the situated practice of the institution. This holistic understanding of inclusion goes beyond biological models of disability. Many education policies (e.g., The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action, 1994) now acknowledge the difficulties children with disabilities experience in their participation, noting these as a social barrier, rather than as a biologically framed lack of ability. However, in practice the biological

differences (primary disability) of individuals with disabilities are foregrounded. Often disabilities are conceptualised as a lack of abilities, and as an individual's problem. This results in children with disabilities experiencing difficulties in different institutions. It is this negative conception, which can result in secondary disability (Vygotsky, 1993). In this study, the child's and the educators' persistence appeared to create the conditions which supported positive participation in the preschool setting and reduced the possibility of secondary disability.

Second, in the process of participation, the negotiation between the demands and the child's motives played an important role. The educators in the preschool understood the underlying motive of Toby's distressed behaviour. They did not conceptualise his motive as simply being naughty or destructive. In some cases, children with autism experience negative attitudes and withdrawal as punishment for their challenging behaviour in mainstream classes (Pellicano, Bölte, & Stahmer, 2018). In this study, the preschool teacher understood the child's perspective and indicated that the child faces difficulties in expressing his motive, and that impacted his engagement with the peers, and vice-versa. Toby was also persistent to negotiate his needs and motive through the demands he made in the context of the play practices. For instance, he kept trying to communicate his motive and continued his actions in riding the blue ride for an extended period (approximately 12 minutes).

In Vignette 1, Toby was continuously negotiating and showing distress in his actions, as the placement teacher did not involve him in the activity. In contrast, he was able to conform with the expected behaviour or the demand in the practice when the educator understood and valued the child's motive for participation in Vignette 2. Therefore, the educator's response to the child's motive is significant. Moreover, the educators not only responded to the child's motive-oriented actions but also negotiated

with the child about the demand situated in the practice. For example, in Vignette 2, Monica modelled how to roll dice and play the game to create conditions for Toby's competency development to be able to follow the rule. It is important for professionals to understand children's motivated actions and to support their active engagement in learning (Bøttcher, 2014).

Third, in response to Toby's demands and actions in the preschool setting, the study found that the educators played an important co-interactional role in support of his development. On the one hand, the educator placed demand on Toby to stop hitting his peer and to follow the turn-taking rule; thus she performed her institutional position. On the other hand, the educator tried to support Toby's emotional experiences by hugging him and sharing his joy; here the educator played the 'greater we'(Kravtsova, 2009) position emotionally acting together with Toby. Similarly in Vignette 2 the preschool teacher expressed her joy after hearing that Toby won and she gave him a Hi-5.

The educator united with the child to act collectively in the 'greater we' position. In Vignette 2, the educator involved Toby as if he would help the teacher. They co-played the counting game for a while and they positioned themselves at the same side of the string whereas their play partner, Henry, was positioned at another side of the string. In the case of answering emotion-related evaluation questions, Stickle, Duck, and Maynard (2017) found that the use of the inclusive 'we' (collective aspect) in questions instead of just using 'most people' or 'they' increased the attentive response by children with ASD. Therefore, researchers should further investigate the collective positioning of the educators and children in inclusion of preschoolers with ASD.

Fourth, in the process of supporting the child to follow the institutional demands of the preschool, the emotional aspect played an influential role to support the child towards a new motive-orientation. The study found the *emotional validation* by adults

with regard to the child's motive and emotional experiences created conditions for new motive-orientation in line with the preschool demands. Moreover, *emotional validation* by adults created conditions for competence development for the child to self-regulate his actions. In Vignette 3 (part B), Toby finally engaged himself in other activities while he was waiting for the blue ride. Therefore, this study found Toby's expression of distress was reduced and he was trying to follow the preschool demand of expected behaviour. In Vignette 4 Toby communicated his motive by raising his hand.

Fifth, available communication resources could not afford the child's communication fully and sometimes restricted the child's participation. The incongruences that appeared in the social situations of the preschool are not only rooted in preschool culture but also in broader social practices. In Australia, funding provision, professional development, and collaboration between early childhood education and intervention programs raise concerns for full inclusion (Kemp, 2016). Further cultural-historical research is recommended to create greater communication opportunity for a non-verbal child like Toby.

In conclusion, this study's findings can be considered as evidence of the dynamic process of participation of a child with autism in a mainstream preschool. The study found the dialectical interplay between Toby's motive-oriented actions and demands in the preschool practice, and educators' awareness about the child's motive, competence and careful negotiation of preschool demands that were supportive of Toby's active participation in the preschool. The secondary consequences of the child's biological differences were dealt with in the dynamic interactions between the child's motive and preschool demands. The focus child's continuous efforts and the preschool's supportive situated conditions together made the child's participation possible. Further research is recommended to understand the collective positioning of the child and

adults, and emotional validation in the process of creating developmental possibilities for children with autism.

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Chapter 7: Finding a pedagogical password for a child’s inclusion

Chapter 7: Finding a pedagogical password for a child's inclusion

Paper Three

Outline of Chapter 7

Chapter 7: Finding a pedagogical password for a child's inclusion

Backdrop of Paper Three

The following chapter is a paper that is currently under review. In this Paper Three, the aim is to explore the participation process of children with disabilities. With regard to the aim, this study selected two children without disabilities along with children with disabilities. Chapter 4 explained details of the participation selection procedure. Paper Three reported the findings based on the focus child Alex's (pseudonym) participation in the preschool. Alex was selected as a child without disability. He was not diagnosed with any disability. Moreover, he was not under any diagnosis procedure nor waiting for any diagnosis procedure before and during data collection period. However, Alex was facing difficulties in social interactions and the preschool teacher assumed he might have autism. In accumulation, eight hours of video observation data and relevant video interview data were analysed for this paper. The results reported in this paper contribute to answer Research Question 1 and Research Question 2.

Paper Three used the concept of "secondary disability" (Vygotsky, 1993) to analyse the data. This paper argued that educators should explore the child's abilities and potential to find out the needed *pedagogical password* to support the child's further development. The term "pedagogical password" is used as a metaphor. For example, in any digital account every user has a unique password to enter into the system. Similarly, every child is different and finding the unique nature of their participation can be more powerful than finding their biological disabilities.

I wrote this paper as sole author. I acknowledge my supervisors' critical feedback to improve this paper. Paper Three has been submitted to the peer reviewed journal *Early Years: An*

*International Research Journa*l. The paper is **under review process** of the journal. The details are as mentioned below:

> Fatema Taj Johora (XX): The preschool teacher's assumption about a child's ability or disability: Finding a pedagogical password for a child is crucial for inclusion, *Early Years*

Please note that Paper Three used **Chicago author-date system** for citation and referencing according to the journal requirement. The paper is attached next as it was submitted.

Paper Three

Early Years ? an international research journal

The preschool teacher's assumption about a child's ability or disability: finding a pedagogical password for a child is crucial for inclusion

Journal:	*Early Years: an international research journal*
Manuscript ID	Draft
Manuscript Type:	Original Article
Keywords:	Inclusion, Social interaction, Preschool, Disability, Cultural-historical theory

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The preschool teacher's assumption about a child's ability or disability: finding a pedagogical password for a child is crucial for inclusion

The advancement of inclusive education policies at both the international and national levels has given greater weight to social justice practices in educational settings such as mainstream schools and preschools. However, inclusion in preschools has received less attention from researchers. This article examined a 4-year-old child's participation in a mainstream Australian preschool from a cultural-historical perspective. In particular, this study used Vygotsky's (1993) concept of secondary disability to analyse the data; and in this process identified a contradiction between parent's and teacher's perceptions of the child's abilities, which 'clouded' the child's position within the preschool setting. Eight hours of video data were gathered across eight months. The findings indicate that understanding the child's personality and potential can be a pedagogical password for the teacher to enter into the child's unique developmental trajectory, which will enable the teacher to further support the child's development. It is argued that by knowing the uniqueness of each child's developmental pathway, educators can battle secondary disabilities and ensure inclusive participation.

Keywords: inclusion; social interaction; preschool; disability; cultural-historical theory

Introduction

Enrolment of children with disabilities in different mainstream educational settings is increasing because of advancements in inclusive policy and practices. However, educators are still struggling to ensure the participation of children with disabilities (Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011). Identifying children's needs and supporting their participation in preschools can be particularly challenging, as this is potentially the first transition point for both the parents and the child as they enter into the new practice tradition of the preschools. The transition between home and education institution can be a major crisis for children (Fleer and Hedegaard 2010), as it requires the child to deal with a new dimension of social interactions outside the familiar home. However, the degree of coping with transition crisis varies from child to child, depending on the child's personality, preschool practices, and culture.

Moreover, understanding the child's individual needs can be confusing as preschool children are still too young for some diagnostic procedures. If a child shows social interaction difficulties, this is likely to alarm the teachers, parents, or other professionals, as difficulty with social interaction is one of the more common features of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The diagnosis process is complicated and prolonged (Ben-Sasson, Robins, and Yom-Tov 2018), and it is not unusual to find teachers and parents confused and stressed about the child's assumed disability. It may add another level of stress if the teachers and parents do not have the same view about any problems the child may be experiencing. The focus child in this study was in an imprecise position, as the teacher suspected he has autism but the parents did not accept such an assumption about the child.

This paper examines the focus child's participation in an Australian mainstream preschool setting. Drawing upon the cultural-historical concept of disability and child development, the study was designed to explore what conditions are created in the preschool environment and how the focus child himself finds ways to participate in the preschool setting.

Cultural-historical concepts of disability

The term *disability* is mostly understood in relation to the medical model and social model. The medical model views disability as a problem of the individual, and it explains the cause, diagnosis, and interventions using medical sciences (Valle and Connor 2011). In contrast, the social model explains disability as a social problem; it advocates for the elimination of social barriers (Oliver 2013) so that the individual can then function regardless of his/her disability. While both models emphasise a single aspect of disability, cultural-historical theory addressed both the biological and social aspects of disability. Vygotsky (1993) mentioned two kinds of disabilities - primary disability and secondary disability, which are explained below.

Primary disability

Primary disability is the biological difference or problem (Vygotsky 1993). For example, an individual with a visual impairment faces difficulties in sensing the environment visually, while the individual with a hearing impairment cannot use the auditory system to hear sounds. These biological differences do not mean that the individual's holistic development as a human being will also be impaired. Vygotsky (1993) argued that a child with disability does not experience disability naturally. For example, the absence of vision is a normal experience for a child with visual impairment. 'The blind [*sic*] do not directly sense their blindness, just as the deaf do not

feel that they live in an oppressive silence….but secondarily as a result of those social consequences of the defect [*sic*]' (Vygotsky 1993, 67). An individual with biological differences experiences disability through his/her social interactions. Such a social construction of disability is referred to as a *secondary disability* (Vygotsky 1993).

Secondary disability

Before elaborating on the concept of secondary disability, it is necessary to understand Vygotsky's concept of human development. Vygotsky (1997) argued that there are two kinds of human psychological development: one is biological, being a physical or natural line of development, which he also categorised as lower mental function. The other is the cultural line of development, which is also referred to as a higher mental function. Higher mental functions are developed culturally through social interactions (Vygotsky 1997). Historically, people developed many cultural tools to ease and to advance social interactions. Language is one of the dominant cultural or psychological tools that is used to communicate as well as to think. Cultural or psychological tools such as language are crucial in the development of higher mental functions.

According to Vygotsky (1993), a primary disability is a biological deficiency of a particular organ; however, the child's natural line of development is not affected by that biological difference. For example, a child with hearing impairment is totally a healthy child despite his/her hearing loss. Therefore, the child's psychological health or ability should be intact. What then causes their disability? Vygotsky (1993) asserted that biological deficiency 'creates certain difficulties for physical development and completely *different ones* [italics in original] for cultural development' (p. 43).

A child with a biological deficiency may experience a problem in social interaction, which then affects their cultural line of development. Therefore, this child

experiences a secondary disability as a social consequence of the biological or primary disability. According to Vygotsky (1993, 42), 'A normal child's socialization is usually fused with the process of his maturation. Both lines of development – natural and cultural – coincide and merge one into the other…this fusion is not observed in a child [with disability]'. For example, a child with hearing impairment encounters difficulties in social interactions, as the child cannot use the culturally available communication tool (oral language) because of the biological hearing loss. The distorted social interaction creates problems in the child's cultural development as secondary consequences of hearing loss. Alternatively, they can communicate using sign language. Therefore, it is not that they have a psychological inability to use language, but rather there is an incongruence between the child's unique biological features and the features of the cultural or psychological tools (Vygotsky 1993).

As soon as a child with disability is born, they achieve a special social position. 'In…families the increased dosage of attention and pity is a heavy burden on the child and serves as a fence separating him from the rest of the children' (Vygotsky 1993, 76). If the child experiences an inferior position, then the low expectation is obvious. When the child with disability holds a high social position, that is also due to low expectation and sympathy. Regarding school practices, Vygotsky (1993) urged:

> The school must free itself from the abundant use of visual aids, which serve as an obstacle to the development of abstract thought. In other words, a school must not only adapt to the disabilities of such a child but also must fight these disabilities and overcome them. (p. 50).

Vygotsky (1993) argued that educators should not focus too much on biological or primary disabilities as it is beyond their scope. Nevertheless, educators need to work to

address the secondary disabilities. This paper analysed data focusing on Vygotsky's (1993) concepts of disability and development of children with disabilities.

Study design

Cultural-historical methodology was used in the research design. While the traditional psychologist measures the result of development, which is like researching the 'fossil', Vygotsky (1997, 44) argued that the focus should be on the developmental process. Drawing upon the cultural-historical methodology, the researcher observed the focus child and interviewed the educators in the natural setting of the preschool; therefore, the child was observed in relation to the whole contextual setting of the preschool. The researcher also collected some relevant documents (teacher's record, attendance record, art works).

The preschool context

In this study, children and adults were observed in a preschool program that was integrated into a long-day-care centre in south-east Melbourne, Australia. The centre had a toddler room (0-3 years) and a preschool room (3-5 years). Sixteen children attended the preschool room (when the project started), and they had a diverse range of ethnicity, language, and socioeconomic status. The focus child, Alex, was three years and ten months-old when the fieldwork started.

One qualified preschool teacher and two assistants were involved in the preschool program. The caregivers and centre directors were involved in interactions with all children. Although children were divided into rooms by age, they generally gathered together for mealtimes and for outdoor play. The preschool practices thus involved multi-age group interactions as well as interaction with other educators. In addition, placement teachers (preservice) from different institutions were involved in

this centre. In this paper, all staff are referred to as educators unless explicitly mentioned. Pseudonyms are used throughout the paper. Table 1 introduces the participants mentioned in this study.

Table 1: Brief introduction of the participants

Participants	Pseudonyms
Focus child (3 years 10 months)	Alex
Preschool teacher (Bachelor honours)	Monica
Centre director	Shaila
Centre director	Jane
Teacher assistant (certificate III and continuing diploma)	Lisa
Educator (certificate III)	Azra
Placement teacher (studying Bachelor honours)	Zoe

Video observation and interview

As cultural-historical theory emphasises exploring the process of development and values the relationship between the child and the social situation, video observation is a suitable method of data collection for this study (Fleer 2008). Video observation allows the researcher to capture a moment in detail and allows the researcher to revisit the moment as often as necessary to identify key activities more precisely. This study is part of a bigger research project and the data were collected over an eight-month period. Over that period, eight hours of video data were collected in accumulation of recordings on the focus child in this study.

The researcher informally observed the preschool practices for two weeks before starting the video observations, in order to gain an initial understanding of the practices and to build rapport with the adults and children in the centre. Therefore, a double role was played by the researcher: she was an outsider who entered the centre with a particular aim as researcher and simultaneously, she entered the preschool to participate in the preschool environment in order to understand the practices (Hedegaard 2008b).

Using a handheld camera the researcher and a research assistant followed the focus child to video record his participation in different activity settings (e.g., circle time, free play, group activities, meal times) of the centre. The researcher had taken field notes to document the day-to-day contextual aspects and to plan further inquiry.

In addition to the eight hours of video observation on the focus child, the researcher also interviewed the preschool teacher and educators in the centre to better understand the participation of the focus child. The semi-structured interviews were conducted and video recorded during, as well as after, the observation period. The minimum duration of the interview was 12 minutes and maximum duration was 32 minutes.

Data analysis

The researcher regularly imported video records and photos to an electronic folder and sub-folders according to dates. The video files were coded and the researcher created a video log to record the time, date and notes about the recording. The data were analysed following the three-level analysis process of Hedegaard (2008a). In the first step, the video files were watched by the researcher and initial interpretations were entered into the video log. In the second step, the researcher looked for patterns in preschool practices and relationships. In the third level of analysis, the researcher answered the research questions using the theoretical concepts and themes derived from the analytical process. Vygotsky's (1993) concept of primary disability and secondary disability were used in the data analysis. From the original video recordings, smaller video clips were created to discuss the analysis in thesis meetings, seminars and conferences to check the credibility.

Findings

The findings are presented under three main categories centred on the focus child and his participation in the preschool setting. Using the following categories, the findings will address how the preschool environment and the focus child himself contributed to the participation.

1. Social interaction challenges and the child's primary disability
2. Teacher's assumption and the child's secondary disability
3. Pedagogical password and the child's participation

Social interaction challenges and the child's primary disability

This paper aims to concentrate on the participation of the focus child, Alex. The preschool teacher, Monica, had concerns about Alex's development and she assumed Alex might have some attributes that could fall under the ASD. However, Alex's mother did not think he has any such developmental issues.

> We spoke to mum about it [assumption about Alex's special need]...Ummm and she… Uhhhh …She gets angry, quite angry. She believes that there is nothing wrong. (Monica, preschool teacher)

In addition to the diagnosis of Alex's probable special needs, the teacher did not feel comfortable discussing any concerns about his development with the parent. Thus the gap between preschool and parent was increasing. Alex's relationship with this preschool practices had been shaped to some extent under the imprecise relationship between the preschool and the parent.

The preschool practices were welcoming for the children, and that was also the case for Alex. He was welcomed into the preschool and was not being bullied by anyone in the peer group. He could participate in any activities he wished. The general practice of this preschool was that he could choose to play with any toy he wished, he

could choose what to play, and how to play. The children were expected to follow some basic rules such as staying outside during outdoor time and washing their hands before and after mealtimes. Other than that, the children were free to choose their activities unless they were disturbing others. Alex was very obedient towards the rules and the educators' instructions.

Alex had verbal skill but he did not talk much in the preschool settings. He mainly communicated with body language (e.g., facial expressions, nodding head) as much as possible, and most of the time he played alone. If other children joined Alex in play, he appeared concerned and sometimes pulled back or created a distance between himself and the other child/ren. He took part in group activities but did not play with others in free play time. He liked to observe other children's activities but mostly did not maintain eye contact with them. The teacher and educators perceived him to be a child with a special need who did not talk much, who loved to play alone and who loved to play with toy trains.

> He does not ask [for]assistance. He will give you eye contact [emphasis in voice]… means he needs a little bit of help and we give it [support] to him….Even [if] a group of children do come and play beside him or to play with him, he moves more to the parallel. He is not social….You need to take him into the social play. He won't go in by himself. And if you step out of the social play for five seconds, he will stop. (Monica, preschool teacher)

It was apparent that Alex was struggling in social interaction, which is the key condition for participation. As the child did not go through a formal diagnosis process, his primary disability is not yet known. Further discussion concerning Alex's diagnostic status is beyond the brief of this paper. Acknowledging the mismatches between the parent's and teacher's views about his primary or biological disability, this study examined his inclusion and participation in the natural setting of the preschool. The

following sections present vignettes to discuss how Alex's difficulties in social interaction and the teacher's assumption affected Alex's participation in the preschool,

Teacher's assumption and the child's secondary disability

This study found that Alex mostly participated in the teacher-led group activities; he did not participate in child-initiated play, except in a couple of instances. Social interaction was a struggle for him. The following vignette describes Alex's participation in circle time, which is a teacher-led group activity.

> Vignette 1, Part A: In circle time, Alex was performing according to the teacher's instruction. The preschool teacher, Monica, was reciting and observing the children's coordination.
>
> 00:04 Monica: Wiggle your fingers and wiggle your toes…
> Stand up, sit down, stand up, sit down…
> Turn around, turn around.
> Alex was trying to move following the teacher's instruction. Children were giggling while Monica was reciting faster. Alex was smiling.
>
> 00:35 Jane brought another child in the kinder room.
> [The child sat beside Alex and he was looking at the child]
>
> 00:36 Monica started counting numbers in a different language using her fingers. The children, including Alex, were also trying to say and show the numbers using fingers.
>
> 01:19 Monica: That was ten in German. Good job!
> After finishing number counting, the children were clapping. Alex was clapping and looking at the child at his right and the child at his left.
>
> 01:20-05:00 Monica was asking questions and informing children about her plan for the next day. Sometimes Alex was looking at the teacher and looking at the boy on his left side. While Monica was asking a question, bending her body forward and directly looking at Alex, he did not respond.
>
> 05:00: The circle time finished.

It is evident in Vignette 1, Part A that Alex participated in circle time and followed the teacher's instructions. He did not show any withdrawal or interruption. However, he did not communicate verbally and did not answer the teacher's questions in circle time. In

Part B of Vignette 1 below, Alex struggles in a group activity where the teacher was not explicitly leading the activity as she did in circle time.

> Vignette 1, Part B: The preschool teacher brought a Lego box for children's play. Six children made a circle around the box. Alex was maintaining a distance. He was positioning himself behind the circle of children. Monica placed another Lego box beside the other box. Monica went to set up an activity for other children. Alex was struggling to position himself in the peer group and reach the Lego boxes.
>
> > 09:29 He moved two steps on his knees.
> > 10:10 Alex was trying to hold his body on his tucked feet and extend his neck to see/pick.
> > 10:16 to 10: 20 Alex moved further and extended his left hand to grab a Lego piece but he still could not reach the Lego box. Then he moved one more step on his knees.
> > 10:28 He reached a yellow Lego piece. As soon as he grabbed the piece, he again positioned himself outside the circle.
> > 10:32 He again approached the box and Rahul (peer) turned back to Alex. Alex returned to his position.
> > Monica: Alex and Rahul, would you like [me] to bring another box [of Lego] out?
> > 11:00 Alex moved to another table [Rahul did not change his position]
> > 11:21 Monica placed another box in front of Alex outside the peer circle.

Alex's struggle with social interaction is evident in Vignette 1, Part B. Despite his struggle, Alex chose a range of strategies from 9 min 29 sec to 10 min 32 sec as Figure 1 presents.

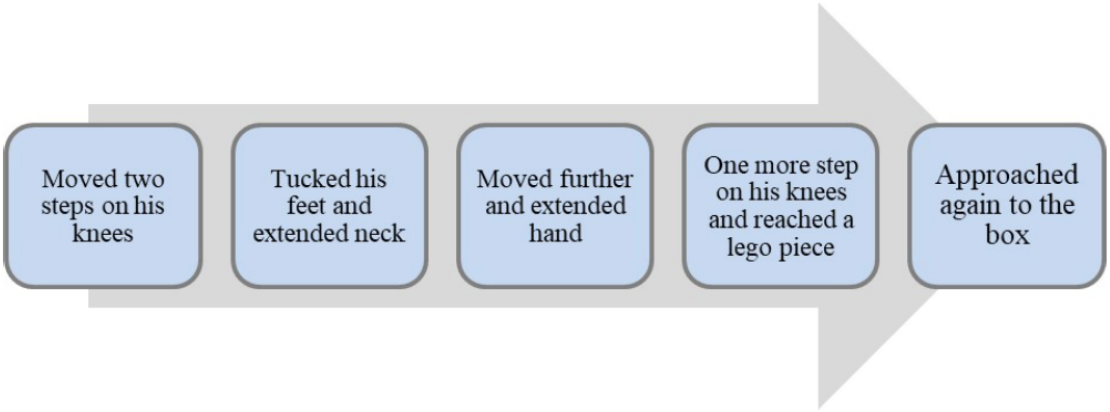

Figure 1: Alex's strategies to get Lego pieces from the Lego box circled by peers.

Figure 1 explicitly shows Alex's strategies to get a Lego piece from the box circled by his peers. It is a very significant example of his decision-making skills and his potential, which could be facilitated to improve his social interaction skills. The preschool teacher might miss the silent role of Alex to get a Lego piece from the box. She was simultaneously keeping an eye on many children and organising an activity for a different group of children.

The data indicate that the preschool teacher noticed Alex's struggle as she brought another Lego box and placed in front of Alex. It could be argued that the preschool teacher provided opportunities for Alex to access the Lego box easily. However, that condition was not supportive in developing Alex's social interaction skills to enable him to participate with his peers. For example, the teacher could show Alex how to ask for personal space. She could put the extra Lego box inside the peer circle and re-organise the circle and could create awareness among children about diverse choices of friends. Instead of including him with his peers, the teacher diverted him to play outside the existing peer circle.

The exclusion is occurring in this micro-setting of the preschool even though the preschool teacher intended to support the focus child. Table 2 presents examples of the educators' interactions with Alex from video observations that indicate they may have low expectations for him or how they were less demanding, considering his autism-like symptoms.

Table 2: Educators' responses to Alex's behaviour

Activity settings	Interactions	Analytical comment
Outdoor free play	Alex was roaming alone here and there. Jane and Shaila were talking about Alex. Shaila called Alex and asked questions about the colour of her dress. Jane said, 'He knows that all things Shaila [sympathy in voice!]'. Alex was slow to respond and replied 'Blue' in a very low voice. Shaila responded with excitement, 'Is this blue? Why are you so shy [prolonged]? Then say b-l-u-e.'	Frustration Confusion Excitement
Outdoor free play	Alex needed help with shoelaces. Alex slowly extends his leg towards Amanda. As soon as she noticed, she sat down to tie Alex's shoelaces. After tying the shoelaces, Amanda also hugged and kissed him.	Non-verbal communication Missed opportunity Absence of usual demands.
Breakfast table	Alex was sharing a table with four other children. Azra, was serving fruit and asking about the children's choices. For Alex, she just served two pieces of fruit without asking anything.	Absence of usual demands

This study found that the preschool teacher's assumptions about Alex's disability were impacting his relationship with the preschool environment. It was not usual to ask a child about the colour of things without any relevance to the outdoor activities. While Shaila was trying to understand Alex's colour recognition skills, Jane was confirming with a sympathetic voice that Alex already knows many things (see Table 2). It appeared that Shaila showed a range of emotions. She felt joy as Alex answered the question correctly and at the same time, she was frustrated as Alex was slow and shy to respond. This paper argues that educators placed less demand for Alex compared to his peers. Usually, educators prompt children to say 'thanks' if they help them. However, Amanda did not expect that from Alex and during the one-to-one interaction she did not encourage him to talk.

Similarly, Azra completely avoided asking questions and prompting Alex for responses. Alex rarely used verbal language in the preschool, although he could speak. No educator took the opportunity to prompt Alex to use words, even though Azra tried to involve other children in verbal communication. Figure 2 synthesises the relationship between preschool practices and the focus child.

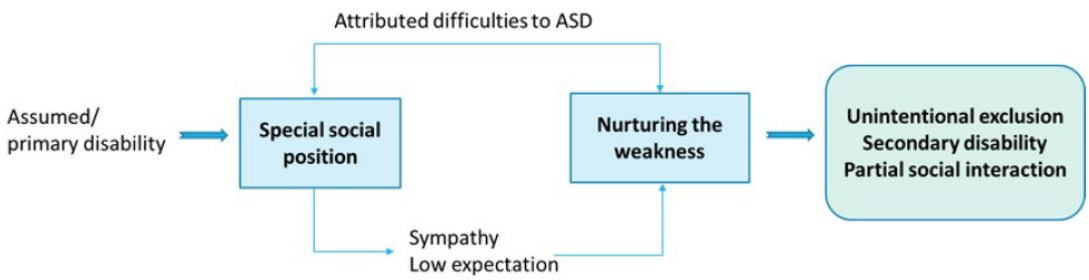

Figure 2: The existing path of social interaction.

In effect, Alex virtually obtained a special social position in the preschool because of his weakness in social interactions. Moreover, educators' attributed his social interaction difficulties to ASD. For example, the preschool teacher mentioned that Alex loves to play with particular toys (e.g., train), he loves to play alone, and he cannot join in social play by himself. Monica planned one-to-one activity for Alex on several occasions so that he can do the activity without being worried about other children's presence. For example, one-to-one digital activity, one-to-one puzzle solving, one-to-one alphabet game, and one-to-one alphabet sequencing. One-to-one strategy in supporting children with ASD is common practice in different educational settings (Olsen et al. 2018). The preschool teacher gave her effort to facilitate Alex's participation.

Vygotsky argued that though discriminatory behaviours indicate low expectation explicitly, special privileges for a child with disability are also provided due to low expectation. In this study, the preschool teacher brought an extra Lego box for Alex and created an exclusionary circle by placing that outside the existing children's circle. Similarly, Amanda did not remind Alex to say 'please' or 'thank you'. Moreover, the centre directors seemed frustrated by not knowing what was causing the child's social interaction difficulties while the child was, in fact, cognitively capable in many aspects – an impression of the deficit model. However, the educators did not focus on his strengths in order to support his social interaction. According to cultural-historical theory, such social responses towards primary disability or primary difficulties of the child, create secondary disability.

However, this study identified Alex's strengths in developing social interaction skills and identified some preschool activities that encouraged him to engage further.

Pedagogical password and the child's participation

This study identified Alex's strengths and potential strategies to support his social interaction in the preschool activities. In contrast to the above scenarios, Alex showed different behavioural responses while the placement teacher and researcher interacted with him. Although Alex struggled in social interactions, he was eager to communicate. In Vignette 2, Alex said some words while he was colouring with the researcher.

> Vignette 2: At an activity table, children took a printed sheet to colour the bunny. Jane, centre director, was modelling to them how to hold the pencil properly to colour. She was supporting children by holding their hands. As soon as the children made progress, they were calling Jane to show their colouring. At the other corner of the table, Lisa, a teacher assistant, sat behind Alex and was helping him to colour. While Alex was trying to colour, he was looking for feedback through eye contact. As Alex just had his head up slightly and was looking forward without talking, Jane did not notice his eye gaze. Lisa also did not notice as she was sitting behind Alex. When Lisa left, researcher sat beside him and was helping him to colour. The researcher was praising him to motivate him. He was enjoying colouring and occasionally said some relevant words related to the activity. For example,
>
> Bunny
> Egg
> Chicken
> Another egg
> Finish…finish

While Alex rarely talked spontaneously, even with the preschool educators, the responses, as mentioned above, were a valuable sign of his ability to interact verbally. Similarly, in Vignette 3, Alex said two words while playing with the placement teacher, Zoe. Alex gradually coped and became engaged in the play. During the observations, it was noted that regular educators did not play with Alex.

> Vignette 3: Alex was playing with the toy train set and Zoe was playing with him. Zoe was moving the train on the rail and was also verbally involved with Alex. For example:
> Zoe: Good job.
> [Alex took a blue engine]
> Zoe: Oh, a new one?
> Here is another one.

Alex: Train track [prolonged and extended his hand to indicate the track].
Zoe: [Moving the engines on the rail] Toot toot here.

There are many other examples of Alex's ability to interact, with appropriate support. The researcher found Alex did not respond to her questions at the beginning of her fieldwork; however, the researcher considered him as *a child* and kept interacting with him. The effort was rewarded as Alex eventually interacted with the researcher, even though he did not respond initially. In one observation, Alex made eye contact and smiled several times at the researcher, who is a relative outsider to him. These responses are very significant, considering his usual social interaction. Alex initiated the communication even when the researcher did not ask him anything. Therefore, the regular involvement and interaction with Alex was a good strategy to involve him in social interaction. Moreover, observing his silent eye gaze and behaviour was helpful for the researcher to initiate social interaction.

Alex was silent and slow to communicate and to express himself; however, he was not unable to communicate. Even in regular preschool practices, it was evident on some occasions that Alex was making eye contact with his peers and was able to approach the group. Vignette 4 below shows that Alex engaged himself in a group activity overcoming his difficulties.

Vignette 4: The preschool teacher, Monica, brought a big box into the backyard. The children were going into the box, and Monica was rhyming as follows while closing the lid of the box for a few seconds.

Monica: X & Y [addressed children's name] hiding in the box.
Shhh [putting the finger on lips].
Until somebody opens the lids.
Boo….

Alex was also interested; however, he took his time to get closer to the box. Gradually, he reduced his distance to the box and stood holding the box. Each time, after a few seconds of being near the box, Alex ran to the slide and then came back to join again.

07:58 Alex was walking around the box.
10:00 Alex came close to the box.
15:30 Alex was walking around the box. This time his radius was getting shorter.
16:13 Alex was holding the box next to Monica and copying her gestures. He was also looking at other children.
17:13 Alex ran to the slide.
19:15 Alex was coming over and standing near the box.
20:13 Alex came over again.
21:00 Alex was in the box with another child.

The dramatic nature of the activity might have encouraged Alex to be involved in the situation by sharing the space, to copy gestures and to make eye contact with his peers. Similarly, Alex did not mind approaching the group during an imaginary activity. Monica set up a silver-coloured tent inside the classroom that was intended to be an imaginary spaceship. The children entered the tent and educators were asking the children what they could see from the spaceship. Alex found this activity exciting and he gradually approached the tent. Although he appeared to maintain a conscious distance from the other children, he was able to ignore the small crowded space and entered the tent (see Figure 3). He stayed inside the tent for six minutes.

Figure 3: Alex is inside the tent (holding the curtain).

In contrast to Alex's struggle to enter into the children's circle to get some Lego in Vignette 1, Alex joined in with the children who were playing in a circle around a big water tub. Even when one of the children came very close to Alex (see Figure 4), he did not change his position. He appeared to adapt to the situation, even though in other similar situations, he had displayed discomfort and moved away.

Figure 4: Alex's (centre) participation in water play.

Therefore, it could be possible to involve Alex in social interactions without measurably increasing his discomfort. In the above examples, Alex took up the challenge willingly to become involved in the activities. Therefore, although in several instances the preschool educators did not create situations that would help to develop Alex's social interaction skills, there were some activities where Alex was able to overcome his discomfort with closer proximity to other children.

Despite his struggle with social interaction, Alex has many strengths, for example, Alex's persistent attendance in teacher-lead group activities, silent eye gaze, and lessened personal discomfort in dramatic activities, could be taken into consideration to understand the child as a whole. Such understanding about the child

can be the *pedagogical password* for the educators to enter into the child's developmental trajectories and support his further development.

Based on the analysis undertaken in this study, Figure 5 presents a potential alternative path for the focus child, Alex, by which the educators could work on reducing his secondary disability. Regardless of a child's potential disability, his or her social position should be simply as 'a child' in the preschool or other institutes. Educators can assume or be aware of a child's special needs but they do not have much influence on the child's biological differences or primary disability. Educators should have high expectations for *all* children, regardless of their biological or social conditions. If general practice does not help the child, the teacher needs to explore an alternative path or create different conditions for achieving the developmental goal.

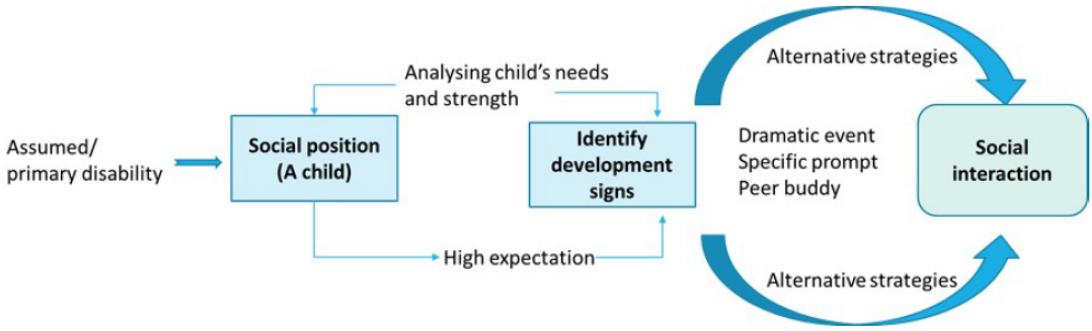

Figure 5: The alternative path for social interaction.

At the time of the study, Alex's social interaction was limited to attending preschool, observing preschool practices, obeying the teacher's instructions, participating in teacher-lead activities, and playing around other children. However, entering into social interactions, playing with other children, and initiating interaction with peers and adults were difficult for him. It is hoped that with support, the child's developmental potential

could be achieved by overcoming his weaknesses through dramatic events and in explicit social demands. For example, specific prompts, extra time and regular encouragement supported his social interactions with the researcher.

Discussion

This study is not to argue whether or not Alex has autism, as the diagnosis is beyond the scope of its research aim. The diagnosis does not give much information to the educators about the child's development process, though diagnosis of disability is needed for many practical purposes. Vygotsky (1993) argued that education should be strength-oriented instead of disability or weakness-oriented. This study found Alex was welcomed in the preschool setting and, like his peers, he was free to join any activity. However, Alex had difficulties in social interactions and he struggled to play with peers. The preschool practices created conditions for Alex, like his peers, to participate in different activity settings. Moreover, the educators created special conditions (e.g. one-to-one support) for him considering his challenges in social interaction and their assumption about his Autism.

The strategy of bringing a separate Lego box for Alex would be described as supportive condition, if the data were analysed using the medical or therapeutic model. One-to-one instruction and separating the child with autism from the peer group for special instruction are not unusual in traditional practices. However, using the cultural-historical lenses, this study found the teacher's supportive intention was acting as a barrier for the development of the child's social interaction. Olsen et al. (2018) argued that separate one-to-one behaviour interventions for children with autism may lead to less opportunity of social interaction for such children whereas they need it most.

Vygotsky (1993) emphasised that the disability should not be nurtured and the education for the child should be strength-oriented. This study found Alex's strengths (e.g., language skill) which could be considered for his further development. The educators could encourage him to use his words (see Table 2) and could ask questions in a way that requires words to answer instead of nodding heads. Auxiliary questioning (Johora, Fleer, and Veresov 2019) with two possible answers could be a good strategy to prompt the use of verbal language.

This study found that Alex could overcome his weakness in carefully created social conditions with explicit demand and appropriate support. Bøttcher (2018) coined the term 'moral imagination' and emphasised imagining and supporting future developmental possibilities for children who have special needs. Alex's spontaneous participation, ability to follow instructions in teacher-led activities and regular routines, and language skill indicated the possibility of his social interaction in greater degrees. His silent actions and eye gazes indicated his interest to interact with others. For example, his strategies in Figure 1 could be used as pedagogical passwords to engage him in group play. Many of Alex's strengths were not given as much consideration as his autism-like behaviour and were not considered to create supporting conditions. This finding is in line with Bøttcher's (2014) study, in which the participant who was perceived as being 'silent' and 'non-communicating' (p. 200) was not progressing well, as his unique communication pace and style were not noticed by the educators, even in a special school placement. Payler, Georgeson, and Wong (2015) argued that a child's nonverbal expression needs to be taken into consideration and they found effective inclusion is possible by gradually setting the boundaries or developmental goals following the child motive.

However, some preschool activities provided opportunities for Alex and encouraged him to overcome his challenges in social interaction. Alex's engagement in dramatic activities is in line with the study conducted by Baudino (2010). The study found a child's misdiagnosis as ASD, which actually resulted from social trauma, and Baudino explained how as a researcher he created dramatic conditions to explore the child's ability to interact. However, this study did not reveal Alex's life situation, history or participation in family and community.

Alex's level of participation in the preschool was the result of both his strength and his particular weakness in social interaction. His weakness in social interaction, and the teacher's assumption about his autism created unintentional barriers for his social interactions. On the one hand, Alex was able to participate spontaneously in the teacher-lead group activities. On the other hand, however, his weakness resulted in non-participation in social interaction and social play. Therefore, his 'attending and doing' (Maxwell, Augustine, and Granlund 2012) dimensions of participation were present but the 'engagement' dimension of his participation in activities and with peers was very poor. He needed assistance to develop his social skills to ensure his greater engagement in both teacher-lead activities and child-lead activities where educators' involvement was minimal. However, the educators missed the opportunity to understand the child as a whole and to follow the child's strengths as a lead to support his social interaction. Instead, the educators followed traditional disability-oriented (here autism) strategies like one-to-one activity to support Alex's participation. Florian and Kershner (2009) stated that there is a tendency in literature to categorise intervention to match particular disability, for example, autism or Down syndrome. Unfortunately, such disability-oriented strategies created social barriers for Alex to engage in social interaction, which

lead to the secondary consequences of assumed primary disability. Therefore, the educators did not find the pedagogical password of the child.

Conclusion

According to cultural-historical theory, social interaction is the key to higher mental development. In this study context, the parent's involvement was apparently missing in the process of identifying the focus child's social skills because of the incongruences between teacher's and parent's judgement. In assessing the child's social skills and planning interventions a strength-based approach should be adopted, which may not only enable educators to plan effective interventions but may also increase parents' acceptance and involvement in the process.

The findings of this study cannot be generalised but have strong credibility in early childhood and inclusive education research. The study uses evidence and appropriate theory to show how to find an alternative way for a child who is struggling with social interaction to participate better. The recommendations for considering 'silent communication' and slow responses and finding a 'pedagogical password' will have implications for restructuring educators' attitude, knowledge, and practice to promote inclusion in the early years. Further research and teacher education are recommended to shift educators' focus from primary disability to secondary disability in their practice and to facilitate their knowledge and skills so that they can reduce the secondary disability and facilitate children's participation in an effective way.

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Chapter 8: Same social situation but different social situation of development

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Introduction

This chapter presents findings on the focus children's actions in relation to the preschool practices and interprets those regarding inclusive participation. In Chapter 4, I have already discussed that I followed children without disabilities and video-recorded their participation to understand the inclusive practice better. This chapter will present the data on the focus child, Ajith, as well as the relationship between the child and the social environment with regard to children's participation and inclusion. Therefore, along with focus child Ajith, other focus children's participation – Maliha, Toby and Alex – will be brought into the analysis. In the main, this chapter will address Research Question 1 and Research Question 2. Vygotsky's (1994b) concepts of "Social Situation of Development" (SSD), has been used in data analysis.

This chapter begins by introducing the focus child, Ajith, followed by Ajith's participation in the preschool settings and inclusive practices. Other focus children – Maliha, Toby and Alex – were introduced in Chapter 5, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 respectively. The main focus is on how the interplay between Ajith's individual actions and social situations of the preschool settings created opportunities for his participation as well as his peers' participation in the preschool activity settings. Moreover, the participation process was studied in relation to inclusive practice in the preschool. The outline of this chapter is as follows:

- The focus child
- Data presentation
    - Resource sharing in the preschool
    - Child's active participation and inclusion
    - Diversity among peers in the same social situation
    - Diversity within the child in same social situation

The focus child

Here I am going to introduce the focus child, Ajith. He was three years and six months-old at the beginning of the fieldwork. Ajith was not identified as having any disability. He was enrolled in this centre at the age of three. His family has Sri Lankan cultural heritage. He lived with his mother, and was a single child. Ajith was welcomed in the preschool, and he also developed a friendship with some other children. He could communicate using verbal speech and nonverbal body language and facial expression. Like other children, he had access to play whatever he liked in the preschool activity settings. However, Ajith's family practices tended to put different demands on Ajith compared with those of the preschool. For example, the preschool teacher shared in an interview that Ajith's parent put some particular restrictions on Ajith, such as Ajith was not being allowed to fill up his drinking bottle from the bathroom tap while other children used to simply fill up their drinking bottle from the bathroom tap. As Monica shared in an interview,

> They [children] take their bottle in bathroom and fill their own drink bottle in bathroom. So [as parent restricted] then we had to stop filling his bottle up. He could not go and fill his bottle up. He got upset, he see everyone else can go and…So mum put a lot of restriction…what he can and cannot do. Then he started to rebel against them and he then got quite upset.
>
> (Monica, the preschool teacher)

As Monica said, Ajith was eager to participate in different activity settings, and observation data also confirm that Ajith spontaneously participated in the preschool practice. More details will be presented in the data presentation section.

Data presentation

In this section the data are presented under four key themes in relation to the focus children's participation and inclusive practice in the preschool. First theme reflects on how preschool resources are shared among children. Second theme refers to focus child Ajith's active participation. Third theme presents diversity among children's participation in same social situation. The last theme refers to diversity within the focus child, Ajith's action in same social situation.

Resource sharing in the preschool

This study found that preschool practice was the same for all children. Access to material resources and rules were the same as we observed for Toby, Maliha, and Alex. Ajith also had to wait for his turn when resources were limited. The following vignette presents how Ajith responded when Henry took the pram with which Ajith wanted to play.

> Vignette 1: Ajith with the pram
>
> It was an outdoor playtime. Ajith was running with a pram. Henry was running beside him. Within a few seconds Henry took the pram from Ajith. Then Ajith was running to another direction without pram (seems he is upset).
>
> Researcher (R): What happened Ajith?
>
> Ajith: …took my pram.
>
> R: Who?
>
> Ajith: Henry.
>
> R: Henry? Hmm…So…what will you do? Will you share [it] with Henry? You can take [a] turn, Ajith, you can take [a] turn.
>
> [While the researcher was talking with Ajith. He was looking for the pram. He found Henry is playing with a ball, and Ajith went back for the pram. Again Ajith came back with the pram.]
>
> R: [Do] you got your pram back?
>
> Ajith: It is *my turn now* (emphasis in Ajith's voice).

Though Ajith might not have liked it when Henry took the pram, he applied some strategies. He moved from the specific place but he kept observing Henry and the pram. When Ajith found the pram abandoned by Henry, he then took the pram. He was also confident that it was his turn. The preschool had the same cultural demand for children with disabilities and children without disabilities. As we observed, Toby (see Chapter 6) and Ajith both had to wait for their turn when resources were limited. While cultural demand was the same for both children, their responses were different from each other. While Toby was getting oriented to this social rule in the preschool, Ajith was already oriented to this demand, and he was practising this social rule in different actions. It seems Ajith has an awareness of the social demand for sharing and turn-taking. Vygotsky (1994b) argued that the child's understanding and awareness matters for his or her relationship with environment or social situation of development (see Chapter 3 on SSD).

Ajith was cooperating with adults, following the cultural rules and following educators' instructions. In another observation, it was found that Ajith was following the teacher's instructions and waiting for his turn when six children had to use two digital tabs for playing digital games. This study also found that Ajith was guiding his peers to follow social demands. He showed his such behaviour in several social situations, as will be shown further below.

Child's active participation and inclusion

This study found that not only the institutional practices but also the focus child's activities within the preschool culture created opportunities for others in the practice. For example, Ajith was not only following the institutional demands of the preschool but also leading peers to follow the social expectations. In Vignette 2, Ajith was sharing his toy with peers and guiding his peers towards socially expected behaviour when they were trying to get a toy wrench at the same time.

Vignette 2: Leading peers to cooperate

> It was an indoor free play. Matte and Nehal both wanted to take a toy construction truck, and tension was going on between them. Ajith was playing with a toy car. Later, Matte and Nehal brought the construction truck around Ajith. Matte started to play with Ajith. He took the toy car from Ajith, and with a toy wrench, he was playing with the car wheels. Ajith was saying to Matte, "I need a new wheel... a new wheel". Meanwhile, Nehal took the wrench from Matte and started to play with the truck wheels. This time Matte got tough on Nehal as Matte was hitting on Nehal's hand, and two boys were forcing each other to get the wrench. Ajith said, "What is doing [sic]…Just wait." He also extended his hand and showed a stop sign.

Analysing the above scenario and others like it in the data set, it can be said that Ajith was not only practising social demands upon him but also guiding peers to take a turn and play in cooperation. When a situation emerged between Matte and Nehal, Ajith showed his concern and suggested that his peers wait instead of forcing each other. Therefore, Ajith was leading peers to follow the social demand of the preschool. It is found that Ajith was also able to share toys with peers. As in Vignette 2, he allowed Matte to play with his toy car. He was also contributing to play with a peer. He not only allowed Matte to take his car but also involved himself with Matte to carry the play together. He took the cue from Matte's actions to develop the play script. When Matte was pretending to work on car wheels using the wrench, Ajith involved himself by saying, "I need a new wheel…a new wheel."

Ajith's interactions with peers indicated his negotiation skill and friendly attitudes towards peers. Vignette 3 describes a free-play scenario where three children (Ajith, Alex, and Henry) were engaged with three kinds of toys (trains set, car set, and puzzle set). Additionally, they kept changing their positions and interests in their actions and interactions.

Vignette 3: Ajith's negotiation with peers

> It was an indoor free play activity setting. Alex was playing with a toy train set on a printed train station mat. He set up a wooden bridge and pushed two toy trains on the bridge. Henry and Ajith were playing with a truck and cars set beside Alex (outside the mat). Suddenly, Henry took two trains (with which Alex was playing) and started to play with the toy trains. Alex moved back a little and sat on his knees. Ajith came on the printed mat to take toys from a basket. He took a toy plane and handed it to

Henry. When Henry took the toy plane and started to play with that, Ajith picked up two train toys from the floor. Alex stood up, and **Ajith handed one of the train toys to Alex and asked him, "[Do you want] this?"** Alex took the black train toy and sat again to play. Ajith kept the green train and went towards a nearby puzzle set. Henry returned on the printed mat and grabbed the train (with which Alex was playing), and started to play by moving it forward and backward. Alex was moved back slowly on his knees. Even he was bending his body backward when Henry was closer. At one point, Alex stood up and again sat down. However, within a second, Alex left the area and moved towards Ajith. Alex picked up the green train toy, which was in front of Ajith. Ajith noticed that and let Alex take the train. Henry also moved towards them. As soon as Alex saw that Henry was approaching, he had dropped the toy train and moved from the place. Alex returned to the printed play mat. Henry started to play with the puzzle set, which Ajith was playing. Ajith allowed Henry to play with the puzzle set. Ajith also tried to guide Henry to match the puzzle. Then Ajith returned to the truck and car toys set and started to play.

Ajith (to the researcher): This breaking car, breaking [sic].

R: Hmm

Ajith: Broken

R: Its broken?! [sic]

Ajith: Yeah, it got a light to fix it [sic].

R: [Do] you like to fix it?

Ajith: She [sic] did it. She [sic] did it. (He meant Henry did his puzzle matching)

R: Who did it? Who did it?

Henry: Me

R: You [to Henry] did it? Well done!

In Vignette 3, Ajith took actions in two kinds of the social dimension. One is when he took toys that Alex (peer) was playing with before – *taking*. Another is when Henry (peer) started to play with the puzzle set with which Ajith was playing – *giving*. Not only Ajith but also his peers experienced the fact of toy sharing and played in the above social situation. Notably, three of them experienced and acted in the situation differently.

Based on cultural-historical analysis, Ajith and his peers functioned in the social situation to satisfy their motive to play. However, they experienced the situated social demand (sharing

the settings and resources) differently from each other. Henry took dominant action to satisfy his motive. For example, Henry just entered into the toy train set-up and started to play with the toy trains with which Alex was already playing. Similarly to Henry, Ajith also wanted to take the toy trains. Yet, Ajith respected Alex's motive as well as his own motive to play with the toy train. Therefore, Ajith negotiated by encouraging Alex to choose one from two toy trains. Alex coped with the social demand by partially withdrawing him and letting peers play at the toy train set-up. Ajith not only accepted peers playing with his toys but also tried to advance the play. For example, when Henry started to play with the puzzle, Ajith allowed Henry to play.

Ajith also modified his role to promote the puzzle-play together with Henry as he was suggesting to Henry how to match the puzzles while before he had been matching puzzles by himself. Even later, Ajith chose to play something else but kept his eye on Henry. Ajith noticed when Henry matched the puzzle pieces and expressed his excitement for Henry, as he informed the researcher, "She [he] did it!" Thus Ajith's friendly attitude and negotiation skill boosted inclusive practice in the particular social situation as well as in the broader inclusive practice in the preschool. Ajith's actions can be addressed as "ideal" (socially welcomed or expected) form (see Chapter 3 on ideal form of development) for his peers and thus open possibilities in the practice for other children to interact with ideal form in a social situation.

These findings are consistent with the theoretical argument of Vygotsky that each child experiences and acts differently in the same social situation as they have a historically different relationship with the situation. In other words, children have a different social situation of development (SSD) in relation to the same social situation (see Chapter 3 on SSD). According to Chaiklin (2003) the concept of "the social situation of development provides a way to characterize the interaction between historically constructed forms of practice and the child's interests and actions" (p. 48). This theoretical backdrop provides a solid frame to understand

diversity among children. It encourages adults to understand the children's behaviour and to address their need in relation to their Social Situation of Development (SSD) rather than in relation to the traditional normative standards of the practices and traditions of preschool. Vignette 4 is another example to demonstrate children's diversity in the same social situation.

Diversity among peers in the same social situation

During the video observation, the researcher set up a video camera on a tripod to capture the whole preschool room activities (see Chapter 4 on methodology and method). The preschool children were curious about it, and sometimes they tried to explore how it worked. The following vignette describes how focus children Ajith, Maliha and Toby acted to satisfy their curiosity about the camera. Part A of Vignette 4 describes how Ajith and Maliha developed their interest in the camera. Ajith and Maliha tried to be strategic in their actions, as they knew they might get a reminder to move. For example, Maliha had scanned whether an adult was noticing her before she touched the camera. Part B of Vignette 4 presents that Toby satisfied his motive very differently and felt emotional distress.

> Vignette 4: Around the camera
>
> Part A
>
> The researcher set a camera on a tripod, and she was sitting on a bench near the camera. One moment, Maliha stood up behind the camera (on the tripod). First, Maliha bent her knees a little to see the camera display. **After a while, she was looking around. Then she closed the display and opened it again. Noticing that, the research assistant called the researcher. Maliha moved and came to the researcher**. Maliha and Ajith continued talking with the researcher. Then, Ajith went to Matte, and the researcher was talking with Maliha. Within a few seconds, **Ajith stood behind the camera (on the tripod). When the researcher looked at him, Ajith gave a [shy] smile.**
>
> R: [Do] you want to look?
>
> [Ajith came to the researcher and touched her to get attention.]
>
> R: You go there [behind the camera]. Have a look.

[Ajith went back behind the camera again and looking curiously without touching the camera.]

R: Good boy.

Next, Toby came to the table beside the tripod camera and went back. Ajith was pointing to the camera display. The researcher waved her hand to Ajith. Ajith said, “Matte” as he saw Matte in the camera display. After a while, the researcher requested him to leave the camera. Ajith bent forward to see the front of the camera and again went behind the camera. Then, Ajith came and sat beside the researcher. Meanwhile, Toby went behind the camera. Toby was moving the camera side to side, holding the controlling handle of the tripod.

In part A of Vignette 4, Ajith’s and Maliha’s actions indicate that they were aware of the social demand that the children are not allowed to touch the camera. However, Toby was recently enrolled, and his actions indicate that he was not aware of the social demand in this setting. The following part describes Toby’s actions and interactions further.

Vignette 4, Part B

The research assistant called the researcher to indicate that Toby was handling the camera. The researcher checked the camera and found Toby already paused the camera. The researcher mentioned, “You paused it here!” Toby tried to say something [he had a dummy in his mouth, the sound was not clear]. The researcher positioned the camera and talking with Toby.

After a while, Toby again held the tripod control handle. The researcher indicated to Toby not to touch the camera. She showed him a smaller camera which was in her hand. Toby extended his hand to take the smaller camera from the researcher. The researcher moved her hand and indicated to Toby to sit beside her. Toby started to scream. He grabbed the camera and tried to take the camera from the researcher. The researcher again told Toby to sit beside her, and she will show how the camera works. Instead, Toby was trying to take control of the camera. Jane (the centre director) noticed and asked not to give him the camera. **Toby started to cry loudly and tried to pull the camera from the researcher**. She again requested Toby to sit and have a look. Toby kept crying loudly. The researcher tried to calm Toby. The centre phone rang in the room. The researcher let Toby take the camera, and he stopped crying.

Toby carried the camera with him. Toby was also playing with the researcher while he was holding the camera in one hand.

A cultural-historical analysis provides the basis to understand children’s different behaviour in the same social situation and suggested examining each child’s social position, awareness about the environment, and emotional attachment towards the social situation. In Vignette 4, the focus

children Maliha and Ajith's responses indicated that they were aware of the social rules and consequences of handling the camera. At the same time, their motive was towards exploring the camera. Maliha and Ajith choose some strategies to cope with the social demand, which was opposite to their motive. Maliha scanned the situation before closing the camera display. As well, Maliha understood the social signal as she moved from the camera while the research assistant called the researcher. Similarly, Ajith gave a shy look/expression while he had eye contact with the researcher. Moreover, Ajith was exploring the camera without touching it, which indicates his awareness about social demands and his competence to satisfy his motive in relation to the social demand.

In contrast to Maliha and Ajith, Toby experienced the social situation very differently. Toby enrolled in the centre recently, and he did not experience the researcher and her fieldwork in the same way as Maliha and Ajith. Toby did not have any awareness about the social demand, and handled the camera as he wished, without any hesitation. Moreover, as he was not familiar with the researcher, he could not rely on the researcher while she offered to show him the smaller camera. Therefore, he showed his distress until he got full control over the camera. In addition to that, Toby might have screamed to express his distress, as his speech was not developed yet (Knost, Matson, & Turygin, 2013). However, Mayes, Lockridge, and Tierney (2017) found that lack of speech development is not accountable for emotional distress. A cultural-historical analysis understands a child's actions in relation to the child's social situation of development instead of their response as a problem behaviour or tantrum (Konst, Matson, & Turygin, 2013; Mayes et al., 2017). Hence, this analysis understands Toby's actions in relation to his social position (recently enrolled), his level of awareness about social demands and the incongruence between his psychological structure and socially available communication opportunity.

These findings are consistent with the cultural-historical theory suggesting that the same social situation of development can have a different relationship with each of the children and thereby different social situation of development for each child. Here the children's degree of awareness about the situation was different, which brings different meanings of the situation to them. Vygotsky (1994b, p. 342) stated "To put it more succinctly and simply, I could say *that the influence of environment on child development will, along with other types of influences, also have to he [be] assessed by taking the degree of understanding, awareness and insight of what is going on in the environment into account* (Italics in original)."

Diversity within the child in same social situation

This study not only found diversity among peers' behaviours but also identified diversity within the same child's behaviour. This study found the focus child, Ajith, had the competence to communicate, negotiate, and follow social demands. Even when other children enter into his individual play setting, he welcomed them, and he adapted his role instead of getting upset or getting involved in any conflict. However, one day Ajith was emotionally distressed, and Vignette 5 presents how he behaved in that situation. Ajith's actions were very different from his regular behaviour. He was sobbing, not following the educator's instruction and hiding under the table. It took almost 25 minutes for Ajith to deal with the emotional distress. During the period he cried on and off and did not make contact with peers.

Vignette 5: Ajith in emotional distress

It was lunchtime. The children were having their lunch and educators were around the lunch tables. Henry was sitting alone at one round table with his bowl of food. The researcher stood beside Henry to observe the session. Ajith was sitting on a sofa and gasping for air as he cried (Note: lunch started at 11 am, and Ajith arrived at the centre ten minutes before the lunch). Lisa and Amanda were serving food to children. Lisa came to Ajith.

01:13-01:45

Lisa: "Ajith, do you wanna come in? Come on."

[Lisa held his hand and moved a chair to let him sit. Ajith was sobbing. Lisa was rubbing his back gently.]

Ajith: Ihh….ihhh.eee..eee…ii (putting a finger in his mouth)

Lisa: Do you need water? In your bag [sic]? Let's go.

[Lisa held his hand and took him to bring the water bottle.]

Ajith: Uh …uuh ..uh…[Ajith and Lisa left the room]

Henry: He (Ajith) is crying like a baby.

02:12-05:38

Ajith entered into the room. He was crying, and Lisa held his hand. She asked him, "Where do you want to sit? Do you want to sit over here?"…Lisa went to bring a chair for Ajith. Lisa held him and pulled him up and trying to make him sit. Ajith did not want to sit as he pushed his body and slid through. Lisa understood and let him go. Ajith was bursting into tears. He walked to another side of the room and held a pole (a vertical wooden infrastructure in the preschool room) and was crying loudly. Then Ajith went under a table which was not visible from the lunch corner. However, the table was opposite to Henry's table, and Henry and the researcher could see Ajith.

Ajith was sobbing, and Henry was laughing.

05:38- 10:46

The researcher and Henry both tried to calm Ajith. Once Toby also visited Ajith.

R: What happened Henry? Why are you laughing, dear?

[Henry was pointing to Ajith.]

R: Who is [a] baby? Ajith? What [is] he doing?

[Henry ran to Ajith to comfort him.]

Henry: What happend?

R: Ajith what happens? Dear? Don't you want to have lunch? What happens, dear? Come on, come on. What happens to you?

[Ajith came out, his eyes were wet, and he had a runny nose.]

R: Good boy. What happens? Do you need [a] tissue? What happens, dear? Everything good at home?

Ajith: [replied yes by nodding his head.]

R: Why [are] you crying? Why? Why you crying dear? Don't c-r-y.

[Henry came to Ajith and addressed Ajith very gently and held his hand gently and asking questions.]

R: Don't cry, okay? (Gently put her hand on Ajith's shoulder). Go, go and have…have your lunch. Have your lunch.

Afterwards the researcher went back to her recording corner, Ajith stopped crying and went back under the table. He started to play under the table with some toys. At one point Toby came, and he was looking at Ajith. He also bent his knees to see Ajith properly under the table. Then he sat down and was staring at Ajith. Ajith was looking at Toby occasionally and rubbing his eyes. Then, Toby stood up and left the place. Ajith continued to play under the table.

16:11- 20:10

Suddenly Ajith started to cry loudly. The researcher noticed, Amanda came to clean up and after seeing Amanda Ajith burst into tears. Amanda asked Ajith to stand up. Ajith came out to Amanda and she cuddled him.

Amanda: Listen…listen, listen…listen honey...good...calm down. Sshhhh, shhhhh…

Good boy, good boy.

[Amanda brought tissue and cleaned his face. During that time, Ajith again started sobbing.]

Amanda: Ajith, Ajith… breath, breath.

[Ajith stopped his crying.]

20:11-35:00

Ajith was standing around a table putting his palms on the table. Amanda was doing the cleaning. Ajith put one finger in his mouth. Then he was looking around, but still, his throat was throbbing /shivering. After a while, Ajith moved to another corner of the room and was taking out wooden blocks from a basket. Then, Ajith left the corner and went to play with Matte.

From Vignette 5, it was not clear why the focus child, Ajith, was crying. Staff informed that he was upset about not getting a chicken nugget. He did not have his lunch at all. It may seem that he was crying for chicken nugget too severely. However, it might not only be the absence of chicken nugget which caused the emotional crisis. Maybe the crisis started at home or on the way to the

preschool. Maybe Ajith was asking for chicken nuggets on the day or the one before. Maybe his mum promised him or assured him about chicken nuggets at lunch. I don't know about what happened, but it is essential to know what had happened before the actual reaction occurred. It is a limitation of this study that parent interviews and home visits were not possible to explore more about the child's home and living situations.

Knowing the child holistically would help to understand the child's *perezhivanie* at a particular moment, as Vygotsky (1994b) stated that environments and related emotions represent in child's *perezhivanie*. Ajith's *perezhivanie* in this specific situation was very different, at least in terms of his emotional relationship with this situation. In Vignette 5, the emotional relationship was more dominant than his awareness of the social practice or social demands of lunchtime. As "the effects of the environment, according to Vygotsky's thinking, themselves change depending on what emerging psychological properties refract them" (Bozhovich, 2009, p. 65).

It is not clear precisely what triggered Ajith's emotional distress, though the consequences of his emotional outburst were evident in Vignette 5. Ajith was looking for emotional support in his emotional upheaval. While Lisa tried to calm him down, her focus was on following the situational demands of the institutional practice. For example, she was going to bring a water bottle, and was organising his sitting at a lunch table as it was the lunchtime practice in the preschool. The social demands upon the child were the same as regular practices at lunch time in the preschool. However, this time Ajith acted very differently in the situation. Ajith tried to escape the situational demands and hid under the table. When the researcher and his peer, Henry, showed empathy towards him, he calmed down. However, the researcher and Henry moved back to their places after a while. They also followed the institutional demands. Ajith seemed to play calmly under the table, but inside he was still upset. Therefore, when

Amanda arrived, Ajith started sobbing extremely. The cuddle from Amanda helped Ajith with emotional release.

Therefore, it can be said that children assess their environment, and they respond to the situation accordingly. For example, Ajith responded differently to Amanda's presence than to Lisa and the researcher. Ajith might expect that Amanda will value his emotional state, and this expectation had developed through the day to day interactions in the preschool practices. Amanda's response to Ajith was qualitatively different from the other two adults, Lisa and the researcher. It is also evident throughout the data that Amanda was very responsive to the children's feelings and emotions. For example, in the case of Maliha (see Chapter 5), Amanda expressed her joy when she understood what Maliha wanted to say about her visit to the Lion King Theatre show. In the case of Toby (see Chapter 6), Amanda reminded Toby about the social demand of turn-taking and validated Toby's emotional distress at the same time.

This study found that *emotional validation* (see Chapter 6) is significant for children with disabilities and children without disabilities. Emotional validation can be defined as assurance through others' behaviour that the person is aware of the feeling of the child and the person cares about the child's feelings; especially in emotional upheavals. Emotional validation should not be read as recognition of the child's feelings. It is more than the mere recognition of the child's feelings, where the child felt that others really valued his/her emotional state. Moreover, it is not a single moment of recognising the child's feelings but a process where moment to moment interactions create a sense of sharing emotional states and the child felt valued. For example, in Vignette 5, Lisa and the researcher recognised Ajith's distress, and they also took measures, but he might have needed more support. However, Amanda's actions can be seen as an example of emotional validation, and the process was historically grounded in the day to day interactions between the child and Amanda and interactions in this particular social situation.

Conclusion

This study found how the same social situations (preschool practices) created the different social situation of developments for four focus children who participated in this study. This section will summarise the findings from data presentation. Moreover, the findings will be analysed further to theorise the participation of children with disabilities and inclusive practice.

Through the data presentation, first, it is found that Butterfly Preschool fostered an inclusive culture, where children without disabilities and children with disabilities participated together. All children participated in the preschool under the same opportunities to access physical and social resources and under the same social demands. Moreover, children's actions in the preschool practice were creating possibilities for general peer development (children with disabilities and without disabilities).

For instance, Ajith was not only embracing the social demands that preschool practices placed upon children but he was also leading peers in play to follow the expected behaviour in conflict resolution. In addition to that he was exhibiting negotiation skills with respect and friendly attitude, which promoted a welcoming environment for his peers in the specific social situations. At the same time, his actions could be considered as "ideal form" for many of his peers who were still showing "real form" (see Chapter 3 on ideal and real form) of behaviour with regard to sharing toys and playing together. Guralnick (2006) pointed out that interactive play with peers is a more complex skill than solitary play for young children and suggested more participation of children with disabilities together with children without disabilities in regular schools and community activities.

Second, every child experiences a social environment differently, as each child possesses a unique unity of social and personal entities. For example, based on the awareness about the

social demands and child's social position, focus children Ajith, Maliha and Toby's actions were different around handling of the researcher's camera. As well, this study found how the focus child, Ajith, experienced the same social demands differently when he was emotionally distressed. Therefore, it can be said that the cultural-historical concept of social situation of development is a significant theoretical tool to explain the diversity among children and within a child.

Third, it is found that a child's emotional attachment to the situation or child's attitude towards the situation is very important to consider in relation to the child's behaviour and participation. This study found that every child goes through tensions or contradictions in their everyday participation in preschool practice. Based on the child's competences (biological or physical and psychological), awareness, social position and emotional attachment, the child reacts to the tensions and challenges. While a child experiences emotional distress, *emotional validation* by educators can significantly support the child to overcome the distress. Therefore, it is crucial to understand a child's unique emotional relationship with the environment to support their participation and development further; it is not only appropriate for children without disabilities but also appropriate for children with disabilities. All children need emotional support and children's emotional wellbeing and emotional competency development are significantly considered in the Australian Early Years Learning Framework's (EYLF) (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2009).

Finally, based on the findings, I would like to argue that educators should not only understand the biological difference of a child with disability but also the child's individual and unique relationship with the social environment. In the case of children with disabilities there is a tradition which attributes their behavioural issues to their disability (see Fauth, Platt, & Parsons, 2017). Does the disability **always** cause behavioural issues? Is the disability **always** a cause for

under-development for a child with disability? I would like to forward the point that a child with disability is also just *a child*. Vygotsky (1993) argued that development of children with disabilities also abides by the same developmental laws as children without disabilities. Therefore, to understand the Social Situation of Development (SSD) of a child with disability, educators should consider not only the child's disability but also numerous other relevant factors – the child's social position, child's awareness about the social situation, and child's emotional attachment with the situation.

For example, the focus children's actions around the camera are noteworthy. It is found that Maliha and Ajith's awareness about the social demand lead their actions in similar directions. They were aware that they were not allowed to touch the camera but they were curious about the camera. Both Ajith and Maliha tried to mitigate their curiosity while they were also careful about adults' reactions or responses to their actions. Maliha's disability did not create any obstacle for her interactions in this social situation. In Chapter 5, there are many examples where Maliha's disability did not act as a barrier to participation. For Toby, his social position and lack of awareness about the social demand played a significant role in his emotional distress. The absence of his verbal speech also influenced Toby's relationship with the situation (see Chapter 9 on alternative communication). Therefore, it is argued that apart from disability, educators also need to analyse other factors to find out more about the relationship of a child with disability with the environment. Disability should not always be attributed as a problem of development for children with disabilities.

While the child's biological difference or impairment creates secondary disability (see Chapters 3 & 7 on secondary disability), educators should create alternative ways for the child so that they can overcome the secondary disability. Chapter 5 presented evidence on how focus child Maliha and educators' actions created alternative ways to overcome communication

difficulties. Similarly, it is important to consider other relevant factors that influence a child's relationship with the social situation, as educators should also do for children without disabilities. As Chapter 6 argued, while focus child Toby's motive to participate in group activity settings was valued and supportive conditions were created to inform social demand for Toby, his emotional distress was reduced significantly. It is essential to understand the child with disability holistically rather than focusing and shedding light only on the child's impairment. I argued in Chapter 7 that it is important to know the child's pedagogical password, which is unique for each child. The concept of the *pedagogical password* was discussed as a metaphor, as to enter into a digital account and use it further, we need a unique password. Similarly, we need to have holistic knowledge about the child's unique personality, strengths, weaknesses, social and emotional states to plan appropriate conditions for their future development.

Therefore, the concept of "Social Situation of Development" (SSD) provides the basis for understanding more about why different focus children interpret and experience the same social environment differently, and why the same environment affords different developmental possibilities for each child. The next chapter will analyse the inclusive practice of the Butterfly preschool and discuss the enablers and barriers in the inclusive practice.

Chapter 9: Inclusive practice in the preschool

Chapter 9: Inclusive practice in the preschool

Introduction

Until now, this study has explicitly answered Research Question 1 and Research Question 2, which focused on the institutional practice and focus children's relationship with the practices with regard to their participation opportunities. However, the preschool culture is overarched by the broader social culture (Hedegaard, 2008a, 2012). In Chapter 4, Figure 4.9 (adapted from Hedegaard, 2012) explains the importance of the social, institutional and individual perspectives for understanding child participation in institutions. This chapter presents answers to the third Research Question: What are the potential enablers and barriers for the inclusion of children with disabilities in Australian mainstream preschools?

Data presentation

This chapter presents data on the enabling factors, which is followed by the challenges identified in relation to the inclusive practice in the Butterfly Preschool. Hedegaard's (2012) model of children's participation in different institutions and Vygotsky's concept of "ideal and real form of development" have been considered as theoretical tools in the data analysis.

Potential strengths for inclusive practices

This study found that Butterfly Preschool practices were welcoming for children with disabilities even though there were some challenges. This section answers the first part of the Research Question 3, and the possible enabling factors are as follows:

- Inclusive culture
- Educators' experiences
- Children's active participation
- Multi-age group practice
- Situation based support

Inclusive culture

This study found that the Butterfly Preschool created a welcoming culture for all children. It ensured that all children have access to the preschool and children with disabilities are not excluded. The educators are actively accepting children with disabilities into the preschool. Commonly, educators shared the view and aim of understanding the child with disability and gradually helping the child to settle into the preschool. For example, Amanda shared her opinion about children's uniqueness in learning and alternative communication:

> Every child is different, special needs or not. Every child has a different pace, style to learn, interest in different things. Pretty much as long as you give building blocks for them …I think they will be fine. And little things are that some are not talking very much. There is body language. A child can be sitting there and telling you a lot of things without saying a word. You know just by their eyes and their body language, a lot of things.
>
> (Amanda, teacher assistant)

One of the educators, Ezra, shared that she follows Monica and Lisa and tries to assist them. Her statement also indicates that understanding the child is significant:

> You have to be patient firstly. And our kinder teachers deal with special needs kids actually. We are just assisting Monica and Lisa. We follow their instruction…We are using a different method for them. But firstly, we have to try to calm down kids and watch their body language, what they want to say to us. If he is hungry or not happy with the noise around. Sometimes we send the kids to another room to give them a more quiet [sic] place.
>
> (Ezra, an educator)

The centre director also mentioned that parents generally have a positive attitude towards inclusive practices and peers are aware of the special needs of children with disabilities.

> The children are also helpful. When they know this child is a special needs one, they always go and help with that child too. Never hit him, you know we have one child (with special needs) for three years…everyone goes and helps him. They [did] not hit him. They understand, the big children. That is the good thing, you know. And the parents too. If sometimes we have new children, sometimes they are aggressive, they start hitting. When parents know this happened, they say okay that's fine—very good parents.
>
> (Jane, the centre director)

Ezra shared how children without disabilities connected to children with disabilities and took responsibility for them.

> Actually, kids connect with other children easier than us. Adults have more difference, you know, it's hard to explain. Kids easily connected to the special need kids, some kids…umm, how we explain, umm naughty [sic] kids connected to nonverbal, not talking, very quiet kids. Sometimes they climb somewhere else; other kids call us to help them, you know, if they are feeling danger, [they report] something happens.
>
> (Ezra, an educator)

Therefore, the preschool staff, children and parents were supporting the inclusive practice in Butterfly Preschool. The Australian government has ensured access to mainstream education for children with disabilities. However, the welcoming attitude and environment are more about social construct than policies. One of the significant dimensions of inclusive education is creating an inclusive culture where everyone feels welcomed and accepted (Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Booth & Ainscow, 2011; Sharma & Pace, 2019). Therefore, numerous studies measured or explored teachers' attitudes and other stakeholders' attitudes towards inclusive education (see Chapter 2).

Educator's experiences

Teachers' and staff members' professional experience, personal experience and their positive attitude towards inclusive practice can be considered as one of the key enabling factors for inclusive practice in the Butterfly Preschool. The preschool teacher, Monica, had 20 years of experience in early childhood education. The centre director, Jane, had 15 years of experience in early childhood education. Moreover, Monica, Jane and Lisa had experiences with children with disabilities in their personal and professional life.

> Before, we not having [sic] any child [with disability] like that, when we bought it [centre]. Where I worked before, there was, you know, my friend has child with special needs. She bring [sic] her child here. We are getting more and more children [with disabilities]. They [parents] find out.
>
> (Jane, the centre director)

> Because I have a family member with special needs. My nephew. I have grown up with him. So it is very easy for me to understand the children…So dealing with special children is not a problem for me. Just finding out what the special need is and go from there.
>
> (Lisa, teacher assistant)

Moreover, they had previous experiences with children with disabilities which may boost their positive attitude towards the inclusion of such children. Studies found teachers with previous experience with children with disabilities have a more positive attitude towards inclusion (Forlin, Loreman, Sharma, & Earle, 2009; Hsieh & Hsieh, 2012; Kwon et al., 2017). However, Hoskin et al. (2015) claimed, in their study with Australian preschool preservice teachers, that prior contact with individuals with disabilities does not have any influence on teachers' attitude towards inclusion. It is essential to understand that inclusive education practice is too complex to predict using any single variable. Instead, a combination of factors can better explain the success of inclusion. Sharma and Pace (2019) elaborated that the combination of three aspects (3H) are important for teachers' preparedness for inclusive practices – Heart (acceptance and commitment), Head (knowledge and skills) and Hand (practice).

Children's active participation

The Butterfly Preschool ensured children's active participation through creating a child-centred play-based practice, which may act as the enabling factor of successful inclusion. Though the Australian early childhood education curriculum is play-based and learner-centric, the discrepancy between policy and practices is evident in the literature (Macartney & Morton, 2013). Australian National Quality Standards emphasise child agency, as it stated, "Each child's agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions and influence events and their world." (Australian

Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, 2017, p. 34). This guideline advised educators to create conditions so that children can direct their play and collaborate with others. Morrison and Burgman (2009) emphasised that children's unique play interests need to be valued in the institution. They said, "Adults must not assume that all children wish to participate in the same play activities as their friends" (p.150). In Butterfly Preschool, children had the opportunity to choose an activity as well as what to play.

On the one hand, the children's agency was allowing children to enjoy the natural joy of play in formal institutional settings. On the other hand, children's free play might allow educators to engage with children who need more adult support or engagement in a situation. Hu et al. (2011) stated that free play and child-initiated activities facilitate inclusive practice rather than teacher-directed activities.

Multi-age group practice

The preschool also created multi-age group practice where children of different ages were getting a chance to play with each other. Though it had a separate toddler room and preschool room, they mingled together at meal and snacks time as well as for outdoor play in the preschool backyard. Even in the preschool room, they had three to five year-old children, whereas many preschool settings classify children and group together children of the same age. Bodrova and Leong (2015) argued that because of such formal classification in preschool, children are not getting the chance to observe older children's play and learn from that. Based on the cultural historical analysis, it can be said that multi-age group setting gives children the chance to interact with "ideal" form of play and activities.

According to Vygotsky (1994b), interactions between child's "real" form with "ideal" form is important for development. However, Cloney, Cleveland, Hattie, and Tayler (2016) supposed that a more homogenous age cohort might be considered as a valuable factor to

influence the high quality of preschool programs. Rouse (2015) found that multi-age group social interaction in an outdoor play setting created many developmental opportunities for children. More research should be done to reveal whether a multi-age group is beneficial for inclusive practice.

Situation-based support

The findings indicated that the Butterfly Preschool tried to combine heart, head and hand (Sharma & Pace, 2019). They provided **situation-based support** for children's inclusion. Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 presented many examples of their support, which was driven by the situational demand rather than borrowed strategies or methods from the literature. However, the strategies were partially similar to *naturalistic intervention* (Coogle, Rahn, Ottley, & Zehner, 2018; Harjusola-Webb & Robbins, 2012; Wong et al., 2014). In naturalistic intervention, teacher or adult follow the child's action or initiatives and support the child in the natural settings of the institute rather than directing the child. In the Butterfly Preschool, teacher and staff mostly provided support following the child's lead instead of standalone interventions (see Chapter 5 and Chapter 6). Such practices of the preschool can also be described as professionals' "craft knowledge" which is generated from everyday professional practice and reflection (Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012; Cooper & McIntyre, 1996; Rigano & Ritchie, 1999).

The main strength of the preschool practice was that they were committed to all learners. Mainstream educators sometimes felt that paraprofessionals are mainly responsible for the learning of children with disabilities (Hu et al., 2011). The Butterfly Preschool did not rely entirely on external support; rather they created their inclusive culture before getting the external support from paraprofessionals. For example, they employed additional staff before the grant approval, which was not a guaranteed outcome of a grant application. They have tried to support children with disabilities while there was no specialist support available for those children.

Challenges identified in the preschool practice

With regard to Research Question 3, this study found a few challenges in the preschool practices. The centre director, preschool teacher and other educators informed on some challenges they encountered. Analysing their interview data and observations, the following challenges are identified:

- Alternative communication and early intervention practice
- Professional development and support
- Parent-teacher communication

Alternative communication and early intervention practice

This study found that Butterfly Preschool created many possibilities for the participation of children with disabilities in its preschool practices. However, if we analyse the social situations through the cultural-historical theoretical lenses, in some cases children with disabilities could not fully access communication and social interactions. As Vygotsky (1994b) discussed social environment as a source of development for higher mental function, it is crucial to create conditions so that every child can experience the social environment as much as possible. In the institutional culture of the preschool, children and adults participate through different activities. Social interactions happen through facial expression, eye contact, body language, artefacts, speech, signs etc. Cultural-historical theory explains how a child learns to use all forms through her/his participation in society (Vygotsky, 1994b, 1998).

In this regard, the normative or standard form of social skills is available to the child as the “Ideal” form in the social environment. Before learning the ideal form, the child uses the “Real” form of social skills. In children’s social participation, the real form interacts with the ideal form. According to Vygotsky (1994b), without interaction between the ideal and real forms, the children’s development will be partial. This study found that, although both the

children with disabilities and children without disabilities have access to all preschool resources, at some points children with limited communication skills were experiencing barriers to participation. For example, Toby did not have speech, and he could not always express his thought. Here, Toby's nonverbal communication is his real form but there is no ideal form of non-verbal communication in the preschool environment. However, children without disabilities have interaction with ideal form of communication (speech), which is the culturally organised system of communication. Therefore, for Toby, there was not an effective interaction between the ideal and real form of nonverbal expression, which may cause partial development for Toby. Thus the absence of the effective interaction between the ideal and real form of nonverbal communication created different social situation of development for Toby.

In the case of Maliha, sometimes her speech was unclear, which acted as a barrier in the interaction between the ideal form and the real form of the speech, as sometimes, educators could not understand Mliha's "real form" and it either delayed their response (ideal form) or resulted in an irrelevant response (see Chapter 5). However, artefacts in activities sometimes helped Maliha to express her thought and adults to understand Maliha's speech. In an alternative way, the adults in the preschool created conditions to interact with Maliha. Moreover, in the interviews, the preschool staff informed that Maliha was getting on-and-off speech therapy as the intervention services depend on funding. During the fieldwork, Maliha did not receive speech therapy support. For Alex, he had speech in real form, but he was not using verbal language skills often. It is evident that his lack of communication skills was challenging his full participation in the preschool (see Chapter 7).

While the Butterfly Preschool created many possibilities in their practice, they could not fully ensure alternative communication support for all children who were in need. A communication system is essential for child development as the cultural line of development

occurs through social interactions. A child without disability naturally experiences and learns culturally developed communication systems in everyday practices and formally in preschool and schools. For children with disabilities, sometimes incongruences (Vygotsky, 1993) occur between their psychological structure and existing cultural communication system. For example, incongruences happened between Toby's nonverbal expression and culturally available verbal speech. Therefore, Toby could not participate fully where situations did not offer him alternative communication systems to express his thoughts in circle time. Toby may face such incongruences and barriers for full participation later, in school.

Our society and education system are designed based on age-appropriate learning outcome and development. In schools, children experience new social demands as well as learning opportunities in comparison with the play-based preschool curriculum. Thus, in an age-appropriate system, previous windows of opportunity shut down and new windows open. According to Bøttcher and Dammeyer (2016, p. 30), many "social developmental windows" will be closed if the child cannot achieve them in an age-appropriate time frame. Thus, a child with disability sometimes lags behind and experiences secondary disabilities. Therefore, an alternative communication support should be introduced for children as early as possible.

A cultural historical analysis of this challenge indicates that the barriers are situated in the broader cultural context beyond the preschool. According to Hedegaard (2008a, 2012) the preschool culture is overarched by broader social values and practices. In Australia, the Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) and Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services work separately (ECA & ECIA, 2012). Therefore, the preschool may have little control over the intervention arrangement and preschools also need to work concerning funding possibilities which are mostly controlled by the broader society (e.g., government), as explained in the Figure 4.9.

This study found that the government has a support system to ensure inclusion of children with disabilities based on interviews with preschool staff. The preschool staff shared that the Government allocate funds for children with disabilities, and they can hire additional staff for the centre. Moreover, parents can apply for professional support. For example, Maliha had received six speech therapy sessions a year before the study started. During the fieldwork, there was no such support (for Maliha) because of the transition to the new funding system, as Monica mentioned. Lisa mentioned that Maliha was entitled to five to six sessions of speech therapy at home.

> Her speech is not very clear. So we are working with her family on that. So obviously, her family is going to do her speech [organise speech therapy]. I think five to six sessions a year, that's all they can sort at the moment. But they try to push for more to help her.
>
> (Lisa, the teacher assistant)

During the study, a cognitive behaviour therapist, Tracey, shared how she works with preschoolers. She usually works with the preschool child and younger children. A psychologist sets the program for a child with Autism, and she works with the child using Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) therapy.

> Usually, I start with preschool [children]. So I start [working] with home, you should start with quite young [children]. And most of them seem to be diagnosed around three years. Sometimes, a little bit earlier. So we start as early as possible. But I have got kinder as well, and occasionally I have gone to schools. They need to come out to a separate room to have their sessions. It depends on the school. Every school is different.
>
> (Tracey, cognitive behaviour therapist)

Therefore, it can be said that the government provides support (Kemp, 2016; Sukkar, 2013) for children with disabilities. The Australian government support the early intervention of young children with disabilities up to six years of age, whereas USA government provides early childhood intervention support for children with disabilities only up to three years of age (Sukkar, 2013). The financial support from the government should be seen as contextual strength for

Australian preschools, as lack of financial aid is evident in many contexts (Alborz, Slee, & Miles, 2013; Majoko, 2016). However, how quickly the children and families can access the support and how much quality intervention service they access can raise questions.

It is found that the funding provision is oriented towards diagnosis. While the preschool service can apply for additional funding citing the special needs of the children, this can only occur when the child has been formally diagnosed with disability. The educators informed the researcher that sometimes some children are under diagnosis procedure, and they need to wait for the diagnosis report and application for funding, and this also requires time to be processed. However, they need to provide support from the beginning of the child's attendance. Therefore, sometimes, staff experience high workloads and the centre management took the initiative to appoint extra staff members before the funding approval. For example, Monica shared her disappointment with the funding procedures:

> I do also find that, with the support that you get, the inclusion support…If they are not diagnosed, you won't [sic] get the assistance. So if you got a child [who] is diagnosed with a disability, you would have that assistance. If they are not diagnosed, you do not get that assistance; which makes it very difficult when you got diverse … Could you imagine? Like my group from 2 to 4.5 (years) and you got several children with disabilities. And if you do not have assistance, it is very tiring.
>
> (Monica, preschool teacher)

As preschool children are very young, it is possible to have some children whose diagnosis is proceeding. Even in some cases, children are referred for diagnosis after they start preschool. Jane, the preschool director, informed that the Department sent support staff, but this was creating a different level of challenges for the Butterfly preschool.

> Last year they (the Department) sent us one staff here. You know when they gave help, they sent us the staff here. But that was not worthy…That time was the worst time for us too. Because that staff only came for two and a half hours. With that child and another children too…If they did not come, they sent another staff for that things. So

> always changing. So we told them (the Department) that we can hire our own staff permanently here.
>
> (Jane, the centre director)

The uncertainty to access funding in a timely manner and its dependency on diagnosis outcome were criticised in the literature (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2014; Sukkar, 2013). It can be said that the funding provision is influenced by the medical model. Sometimes diagnosis process is complicated and time consuming (Ben-Sasson, Robins, & Yom-Tov, 2018), which delays early intervention support. It takes an average of 12 months in Australia from first raising concern to a diagnosis for children with autism (Bent, Barbaro, & Dissanayake, 2020). Hence further research and policy discussions are needed in Australia to reform the funding provision and to ensure more effective early intervention services for children with disabilities.

A cultural historical analysis indicates that the broader social practices (e.g., government funding) influence institutional (e.g., preschool) culture. Moreover, this study found that an institution's culture is not only influenced by broader social culture but also by the parallel institution's culture. For instance, the independent practice of ECI affects the inclusive practice in ECEC.

Professional development and support

The preschool teacher and director viewed that training was vital. In Australia, the preschool teacher and educators should have professional qualifications as a job requirement. The qualification requirement varies for the role of the individuals. In this preschool, we found educators' qualifications from Certificate III to Diploma and Tertiary degree in Early Childhood teaching. Apart from the educational qualifications, the preschool teacher, Monica, had attended a few training programs. Monica felt she learnt new strategies from training. For example, she shared that she learnt alternative strategies to calm a child who liked to wrap himself in a carpet.

> Yap, yap [training] much more helpful. Get different views from people, different ideas to handle a certain situation. We got one [child] who likes to wrap himself up in the carpet. Carpet got sands, it got bug, it got everything else…as he constantly doing that, I found stocking in the cupboard…the other day we used box…so he can take a deep breath.
>
> (Monica, the preschool teacher)

Jane informed that they get invitations from the Departments for workshops and training. However, they cannot always participate as it requires money as well as time:

> We are doing those things too, doing seminars. We are going there [seminars] to find out. We also said to them [the Department] give us seminars (free) to help us in how to settle the child. That is otherwise expensive. Over two hundred or three hundred [dollars], if we go for one day. How can we afford [it]? And we (need to) afford another staff to pay…two staff [When one staff goes for seminar another replacement staff is needed].
>
> (Jane, the centre director)

Moreover, it is a question of how pre-service training is preparing an educator for addressing the special needs of children with disabilities. The placement teacher (pre-service teacher), Ming, felt that she was not sufficiently prepared (see Chapter 6). The following excerpt is indicating that in Ming's tertiary curriculum, the concepts of inclusion, disability, and special needs might not be included as a major component.

> Ming: I came to this centre. I also found some children with special needs. I have no idea about it. I just know he or she needs more attention and more special help. But I do not know how to do it. I have not learnt at university.
>
> R: In your Master's course, is there any component about them?
>
> Ming: I do not have any. Because I remember that I learned about literacy, numeracy, policy, leadership, sustainability and … I do not think I have anything about special education.
>
> R: In policy, have you learned anything about inclusion and inclusive education.
>
> Ming: Ya, ya ya ya! I know…

Teachers and other professionals' preparedness for supporting special needs of a child with disability was questioned in some of the research literature, and further investigation and reforms

in pre-service and in-service professional development were suggested (Forlin et al., 2013; Kemp, 2016)

Parent-teacher communication

This study found that the Butterfly Preschool had experienced some challenges in communicating with parents. Similarly, some parents might not be ready to discuss the disability and special needs. For example, Lisa mentioned a parent's disappointment about the educators' concerns:

> We obviously have spoken to mum regarding that [assumption about disability]. Probably over 12 months ago. Mum was not quite impressed with that. We just let it go for when mum is ready. We do not know if she will be ever be ready to get him assessed or get him checked out. But that's up to mum now. If we say something, mum is not quite happy, so we just leave it.
>
> (Lisa, teacher assistant)

It seems that the parent may not respond to the educator's concern openly. Monica also indicated (see Chapter 7) that a parent's response stopped them from taking the discussion of child's possible disabilities further. Jane reported that Maliha's parent did not share information about Maliha's special needs until she had a seizure in the centre, even though her parents knew her diagnosis:

> Parents first, they did not tell us. Once we have here little bit of problem, so we find out. I think the parents know that time too…yaa. Then they said, "give her Panadol if she is having little bit fever too. If the temperature does not go down quickly, then give her Nurofen".
>
> (Jane, the centre director)

The limitation of this study is that there are no parent interviews to know their opinion or view. However, if we think about broad social culture, disability is still stigmatised (Alborz et al., 2013). Parents' denial, and frustrations, are common (Bøttcher & Dammeyer, 2016). It may not be that parents are always in denial. They may have faced negative experiences around their child's disability, which may lead to their silence in this regard. Hedegaard (2012) explained that the broader social culture influence institutional culture and they both influence an individual's actions and interactions. Hu et al. (2011) found teachers felt the challenge to work with parents of children

with disabilities, and they felt the distinct need of training for effective collaboration with parents. In Australia, although partnership is one of the key principles of EYLF, genuine reciprocal and mutual partnership is missing in practice (Hadley & Rouse, 2018).

The challenges identified in this study are consistent with current research findings, which validate the participants' claims about the obstacles. Such challenges might be experienced by other preschools in Australia, and more research should be done to explore how other preschools practise inclusive education. Despite the above-mentioned challenges, the Butterfly Preschool created inclusive practice, to a certain extent.

Conclusion

Inclusive education is a continuous journey, and this study has identified some potential enablers and barriers for inclusive practices in Butterfly Preschool. Overall, it was found that the preschool created an inclusive culture in their practices. Educators' professional experiences and experiences with children with disabilities may influence their positive attitude and confidence towards inclusive practice. Importantly, the preschool did not wait to support the children with disabilities until receiving funding or professionals' support. Both the preschool and the children's active engagement created situation-based alternatives to ensure the participation of children with disabilities.

However, the preschool could not fully ensure alternative communication systems for children who needed them. It is discussed above how children with disabilities sometimes do not have opportunities to interact with the "ideal form" of their "real form" of communication; whereas interaction between ideal and real forms of cultural development happen for children without disabilities. Thus, the biological impairment sometimes alters the child's relationship

with the social situation and creates unique SSD for the child when the available communication system cannot afford or accommodate the child's unique ways of communicating.

Therefore, an alternative communication system should be introduced to the child with disability (if needed) in early years before the "social developmental windows" (Bøttcher & Dammeyer, 2016) for communication are closed. Hence, if a child who needs an alternative communication system does not access that in early years, it will not only affect his/her full participation in preschool but also will affect their future developmental trajectories. Holistically, stakeholders should create conditions for alternative or roundabout ways of development in society, institutions and activity settings to battle secondary disabilities. More studies should be done to explore the strategies to ensure effective early years' support, as many barriers are identified in practice.

As discussed, a preschool as a cultural institute overarched by the broader society, has values and practices that have an impact on the preschool practices (Hedegaard, 2008a, 2012). As discussed in Chapter 2, the practice of inclusive education is not historical, and is a new journey for countries, societies, communities and preschools as well. As a result, ongoing changes in policies and practices are evident, and even philosophical viewpoints are changing. Therefore, the identified strengths and barriers could be seen as learning points to consider in research, policies and practices. The next chapter will discuss all the results presented in the data presentation chapters and the published or under-review papers (Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9) and make recommendations for further studies.

Chapter 10: Discussion and Conclusion

Chapter 10: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter encapsulates the findings of the study in relation to the research aims. It will also shed deeper insight into inclusive practice in preschools based on the results. Following the discussion, it will articulate the contributions of the study. Finally, this chapter will conclude the study with the recommendation for future research and implications of the research.

Answering the research questions

This study aimed to explore the participation of children with disabilities in Australian mainstream preschools. This section discusses the findings based on the following research questions the study aimed to answer.

1. How do the Australian mainstream preschool practices create conditions for children with disabilities to participate in preschool activities?
2. How do children with disabilities create their individual pathways for participation in the Australian mainstream preschool activities?
3. What are the potential enablers and barriers for the inclusion of children with disabilities in Australian mainstream preschools?

Research Question 1 is directed towards revealing the institutional culture of the preschool. As Hedegaard (2012) showed that the broader social culture overarches institutional culture, here, the discussion links that aspect as well. Research Question 2 will answer how individuals interact in institutional practice. Apart from the overall culture, there is a unique relationship between each child and the preschool practices, which is a complex relational whole and it is challenging to answer in simple equations. Therefore, Research Question 1 and Research Question 2 have been

considered as a complex unity and answered simultaneously through the discussion of each child's relationship with the preschool culture. Each child's relationship with the preschool practice was discussed in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8. Research Question 3 was answered in Chapter 9. The following Table 10.5 summarises the findings of the study.

Table 10.5: Summary of the study findings

Chapter	**Questions answered**	**Concepts**	**Findings**
Chapter 5	Research Question 1 & 2	Roundabout (alternative) ways of development	The focus child (Maliha) created her own participation trajectory by her persistent involvement in the preschool. Maliha used educators as ***living auxiliary tools*** and educators used ***auxiliary questions*** to support Maliha to ensure meaningful communication. Thus, the preschool practice and the child herself both overcome the social consequences (secondary disability) of her Soto's syndrome, which challenged her expressive language competencies.
Chapter 6	Research Question 1 & 2	Motive and Demand	The focus child (Toby) used his expressive signs to communicate his motive for participation in different activities and created demand for others in preschool. The preschool teachers explained to peers about Toby's motive, created opportunities to involve him in various activities. The study found ***emotional validation*** by adults in preschool practice created conditions for new motive development in line with preschool culture (e.g., turn-taking, raising hand). Thus, the dialectic interplay between the child's motive and preschool

Chapter	Questions answered	Concepts	Findings
			demand created participation opportunities for a child with ASD.
Chapter 7	Research Question 1 and 2	Primary disability and secondary disability	The focus child's (Alex) "silent communication" initiatives were sometimes invisible, and the preschool created one-on-one supports along with regular preschool activities focusing on his primary disability (assumed). This chapter argued that understanding a child's uniqueness, personality, and potentials can be a ***pedagogical password*** to create conditions for the child's unique developmental trajectory and to battle secondary disability.
Chapter 8	Research Question 1 and 2	The social situation of development	Although the focus children participated in the same social environment of preschool, each child experienced the preschool practices differently and participated differently as their social situations of development are different. It is argued that to understand the unique social situation of development of a child with disability, educators need to consider the child's social position, child's awareness about the social situation and child's emotional attachment to the social situation along with the child's impairment and its relation to the social situation.
Chapter 9	Research Question 3	Hedegaard's (2012) model of children's activity settings in	The preschool created many conditions which were potential strengths for inclusive practice. In the inclusive journey

Chapter	Questions answered	Concepts	Findings
		different institutions (see figure 4.9). Ideal and real form of development	of the preschool, other social values and traditions supported the preschool. However, a few challenges were identified for inclusive practice as well. Notably, this study found that alternative communication styles of children were not fully addressed.

Lesson learned and rethinking inclusion

The main purpose of this study is to explore the participation of children with disabilities in mainstream Australian preschools. In this regard, this study used the cultural-historical theory of child development and disability from designing to reporting the research findings. Based on the findings and discussion in Chapter 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9, this section presents the implications of this study. In other words, what I have learned from this study about including children with disabilities in mainstream education from the early stages of their lives is presented here under the following themes.

- Child's active participation
- Emotional validation
- Early intervention and roundabout way of development
- Dialectical nature of social influences and inclusion
- Battle the secondary disability
- A child with disability *as a child* and disability *as demography*
- Rethinking inclusive practice

Child's active participation

Children participate actively in different activity settings. Children participate in historically developed cultural contexts, but at the same time, they negotiate their motives and contribute to situations (Højholt & Kousholt, 2018). Children with disabilities also participate as an active participant, and thus children experience the same environment differently. Therefore, children with disabilities also experience inclusion differently in the same preschool environment. For instance, in this study, Maliha and Toby explicitly placed demands on educators who need to respond to a lot of children and other preschool demands. As Maliha and Toby were continuously negotiating their demands, and educators decided to respond to their demands, and thus both actions co-created participation possibilities for Maliha and Toby. In contrast to Maliha and Toby, Alex's silent eye-gaze actions were almost invisible in an active preschool setting. In a busy preschool, a teacher may attend lots of social demands upon him/her and a teacher may miss some significant information unintentionally. Therefore, video observation could be a way to follow the child's actions and interactions for teachers to analyse the practice and to change the practice for better inclusion.

Emotional validation

This study found adults' emotional engagement is significant for children's participation in preschool. This finding is consistent with the argument that cultural-historical understanding of emotions places adults' role in a central position for children's emotional development (Fleer & Hammer, 2013). Preschool is the first transition for most children from home to another social institute. Children face many new demands which are different from home in many ways. Moreover, separation from the family for long hours may raise significant emotional challenges for young children. Thus, the transition and other everyday activities place a lot of demand on young children and children can face developmental crisis. If the developmental crisis is supported

by the adults, it then creates developmental possibilities for young children; otherwise, it could be highly detrimental for the child (Hedegaard, 2012).

As children get help from parents or other adult caregivers in the family, they also choose adults to seek help from them. When a child comes to preschool, the child also tries to apply their family experiences and seek help from adults. This study found both children with disabilities and children without disabilities look for emotional validation in their emotional crisis. It is not only the transition from home to preschool that can create a crisis for a child, but also the overall dynamic social demand on a preschooler might create a developmental crisis for a child (Holodynski & Friedlmeier, 2005). The authors present that, whereas the caregivers respond to a baby's emotional expression promptly, preschoolers are expected to coordinate their own motive satisfaction, as caregivers may not follow their appeal in every situation. Holodynski and Friedlmeier (2005) also pointed out that caregivers expect preschoolers to switch their emotional expression towards verbal requests because of their ongoing progress in speech development. This study found that in this new relationship between the child and his/ her surroundings, and emotional validation from others work as supportive levers to overcome the emotional distress.

The findings are similar to the study by Lilian et al. (2015) as they found that if emotional needs are met appropriately, that can accelerate the participation of the children with learning disabilities. Positive interaction with caregivers helps children to explore their environment and provides better learning opportunities (Palmer et al., 2012). Neuroscience also suggests educators to provide sensitive encouragement and support in a welcoming and accepting environment, as that can create developmental possibilities, even for vulnerable children (Sinclaire-Harding, Vuillier, & Whitebread, 2018).

Early intervention and roundabout way of development

This study found the early intervention practice in Australia is diagnosis-oriented, as it is in many other countries. Children with disabilities cannot access services until their diagnosis has been completed (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2014). Similarly, in the USA, children need assessment in order to be eligible for Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) services for disability, and sometimes assessment is difficult for young children (Hebbeler & Spiker, 2016). Not surprisingly, de-contextualised children's problems (ignoring the child's perspective and participation in context) is valued in institutional practice in Denmark in order to gain support (Røn-Larsen, 2018). However, early intervention is significant for some children with disabilities and the best possible early start of intervention can reduce secondary disability. Needs-based individual early intervention may help to create alternative or roundabout ways of development for children with disabilities.

In this study, one focus child, Maliha, and the preschool adults almost overcame possible secondary disabilities for her. Maliha used adults as *living auxiliary tools* and adults used *auxiliary questions* to reach shared meaning in communication. However, an appropriate early intervention program could create more developmental possibilities for her. Though Maliha received a few speech therapy sessions, the complex funding process resulted in discontinuation of her early intervention services. The other focus child, Toby, was not receiving any early intervention support services. This study found the absence of his speech sometimes restricted his full participation. An early intervention program could help him to express his thought in sign or pictures (Brodzeller, Ottley, Jung, & Coogle, 2018).

It is central for a child's ability to communicate verbally or nonverbally in order to engage in activities (Bøttcher, 2018b). While a child has to wait to receive any alternative communication system, the child will likely experience secondary disabilities. Therefore, the

lack of opportunities in the environment can cause the child to be left behind his peers in cultural practices. It is not only that the child with disability is not able to develop like his peers. A child with disability can reach identical developmental goals as her/his peers without disabilities through a roundabout or alternative way (see Figure 3.6). A long waiting period for an alternative path for development will create significant gaps between children with disabilities and their peers. Hence, it is crucial if a child needs any alternative way to develop, the alternative route should be introduced as early as possible. For example, a child with hearing impairment who received a cochlear implant in their infancy did not experience any secondary disability in their school, though they had moderate hearing difficulties (Bøttcher & Dammeyer, 2016). Therefore, early intervention should be introduced in the early years of a child with disability.

Consequently, after the child's transition to primary school, a different group of social demands will be placed upon the child. Many social opportunities which were available for the preschool child will disappear as new social opportunities and demands will appear in their place. Therefore, if any child is clearly left behind his/her peers, many "social developmental windows" (Bøttcher & Dammeyer, 2016, p. 30) will be closed for that child. Cultural-historically, society places new demands which are culturally valued as age-appropriate and new age-appropriate social developmental windows are opened for a particular age group (e.g., school children, teenager) to support specific sets of skills.

Dialectical nature of social influences and inclusion

It has been discussed already that a child's actions and development should be understood in relation to the social situations where the child is participating. The institutional culture rules social situations, and at the same time, social situations define institutional culture. The institutional cultures are overarched by broader social values (Hedegaard, 2012). Therefore, a social institution's practice should be understood in relation to its position in society and its interactions

with other social institutions. This study found that not only do the overarching social values influence institutional practices but other parallel institutions also have an influence on the institute. The influence is not top-down, bottom-up or linear, but it is complicated and dialectic – each influences the other's development. Hedegaard's (2012) model showed how the family and schools' activities influence each other. This study found that not only the family but other parallel institutions also influence each other. For example, this study found how Early Childhood Intervention Australia (ECIA) influenced the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector in Australia. Therefore, we should also understand institutional practice in relation to other institutions and the broader social practices.

Moreover, inclusive education is a social practice which is itself in the developing phase, and its transition from a healthy segregated special education practice made the inclusion of children with disabilities challenging. While theoretical understanding is progressing, pragmatic changes seem to be lagging behind in relation to the progress in philosophy. In discourse analysis, Macartney and Morton (2013) pointed out the discrepancy between the policy documents and the practice. They argued that while documents are child-centred and focused on children's competences, in practice, deficit-based assumption and practices are prominent.

Battle the secondary disability

Through this study, I gained the insight that educators should battle the secondary disability of a child rather than focusing too much on the primary disability or the biological differences. These findings are fully supported by Vygotsky (1993) and cultural-historical theory. While Vygotsky showed his concern (as follows) about misleading development of children with disabilities in the early decades of the 20th century, children with disabilities are still in risk of being misled almost a century later:

> The greatest mistake - the view of a child's abnormality as only an illness - has made our theory and practice subject to a most dangerous delusion…why until now special education has been spent 90 percent of its time on the children's illness and not on their health.
>
> (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 80).

Vygotsky argued that we should shift our attention from the primary disability or biological impairment to secondary disability, and this study also found that too much focus on physiological disability is misleading in education and development, because humans' higher psychological functions are not biological, instead they are social and cultural. Educators mainly facilitate our cultural line of development. Therefore, information merely about the child's biological impairment cannot help educators to plan well for the child's cultural trajectory of development.

Based on types and similarities of different symptoms, professionals categorise or label various disabilities. In our society, not only disability but also all concrete and abstract entities belong under separate categories. These categories help us to communicate general information about the types. For example, the word or category "tree" represents some common characteristics of a group of plants. Beyond the general features of a tree, every specific tree has its own features, which cannot be informed by the word "tree". Similarly, the categories of biological differences represent some general information about a group of individuals but cannot describe the whole individual.

For example, the phrase "child with autism" represents that the child has different neuro-development from most of the population and this group of children is less involved in social interactions (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). It is essential to know that this category can represent a group but not an individual with autism. For example, this study found the focus child Toby has autism, but he was eager to interact with peers and adults. On the other hand, Alex was observed to be involved in solitary play rather than social play with peers. Alex did not have any diagnosis, but it was assumed by the educators that Alex may have autism. However,

Alex participated in teacher or adult lead group activities spontaneously. If the teacher's assumption is also a diagnosis result for Alex, or if we imagine Alex has autism, it will indicate that two children with autism will not participate in the same way although their biological impairments are same. Similarly, Bøttcher (2011) found that the participation of two different children with cerebral palsy in school was very different, as they experienced different kinds of social opportunities. Even for Maliha, all the features of Soto's syndrome were not disrupting her participation, except for her expressive language difficulties.

Other findings of this study strongly indicate how the emphasis on the primary disability can be misleading for a child's development. As the preschool teacher assumed Alex has autism, they sometimes choose one-on-one activities for Alex to support his development. The teacher intended to help the child, and she chose an evidence-based support strategy, one-on-one support (Brodzeller, Ottley, Jung, & Coogle, 2018; Wong et al., 2014). However, the teacher's good intention created more social distance for the child, even when the child was trying to reduce the social distance with peers (see Chapter 7). Moreover, emphasis on Alex's assumed disability might direct the preschool teacher to find appropriate strategies for children with autism rather than for Alex specifically. Such an approach ignores the individual child. It focuses on knowledge about a group of children with a particular disability, subsequently educators explored strategies for children with autism instead of exploring the child's potential.

This study did not explore Alex's primary disability. However, it showed how the focus on disability sometimes created secondary disabilities for Alex. If the teacher could focus on the child's strengths, it would help the teacher to advance the child's developmental journey. Vygotsky (1993) discussed:

> No matter what the affliction may be, whether it be blindness, deafness, catarrhs of the Eustachian tube, or perversion of taste, we meticulously analyze every corpuscle of the defect, every little speck of disease found in abnormal children, while we never

> notice the gold mines of health inherent in each child's organism, no matter what the affliction may be. (p. 80)

This study identified some strengths of the child and indicated a way forward to battle the secondary disability. The study suggested how to find the pedagogical password for a child to lead him/her forward his/her unique developmental trajectories.

A child with disability *as a child* and disability *as demography*

Based on this study, I come to this point of knowledge that a child with disability should be viewed *as a child*. Such understanding will allow the educators to facilitate learning and development of *a child*, not of a child with disability. "It is necessary to educate a child *not as a blind* [sic] *child but as a child* [Italics in original]" (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 83). A child with visual impairment may need a Braille system to read or write, but his development follows the same law of development as his peers without disabilities. "The education of a blind child and a deaf child does not differ from the education of a normal child….Again I repeat: *the principles and the psychological mechanism of education are the same here as for a normal child* [Italics in original]" (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 112).

My argument is that the disability (biological difference) a child is diagnosed with can be a piece of demographic information for educators. It should carry the same importance as other demographic information carries in an educational setting. For example, a child is a boy, a child for whom English is a second language, a child with aboriginal cultural heritage, a child with European cultural heritage – these are all demographic information and this information is sometimes useful for the educators, but it does not provide information about the child's personality, emotions, motives etc. Vygotsky (1993) criticised the practice of emphasising a child's disability too much.

Therefore, educators should avoid the deficit view of disability (Macartney & Morton, 2013) if they want to ensure the participation of a child with disability. They need to find out more about the child's strengths, child's motives, child's relations with social situations and how the disability (biological) or impairment is creating incongruences for their participation. Educators should thereby consider the child as a whole and find out about his/her individual needs in relation to the social situation or his social situation of development. "It is not a diagnostic label, in itself, that is important to teacher planning but the individual needs of each child" (Walker & Berthelsen, 2008, p. 48). For example, when educators focused on Alex's disability, they could not notice his strengths or unique needs.

The diagnostic label of disability or identification of primary disability (biological difference) does not always inform how it alters the relationship of the child with the environment. For Hedegaard and Daniels (2011), "We believe that there is much to be gained from theory that guides intervention towards the person in a situation rather than towards a feature that lies within the person alone."(p.1). Vygotsky (1993) suggested that education should aim to understand the child's social potential. Educators therefore need to observe the child to know how the child's disability alters his/her relationship with the environment and thus plan to overcome the secondary disability for the child. Bøttcher and Dammeyer (2012) also pointed out that "observation and analysis of the incongruence are important" (p. 445).

Rethinking inclusive practice

Based on the theoretical frame, results and discussion, Figure 10.15, following, presents a new model of inclusive practice in preschool. This model is appropriate for inclusion of any child (regardless of her/his background and biological disability). The model illustrates that dialectical interplay between preschool practice and the individual child should be analysed from three different aspects.

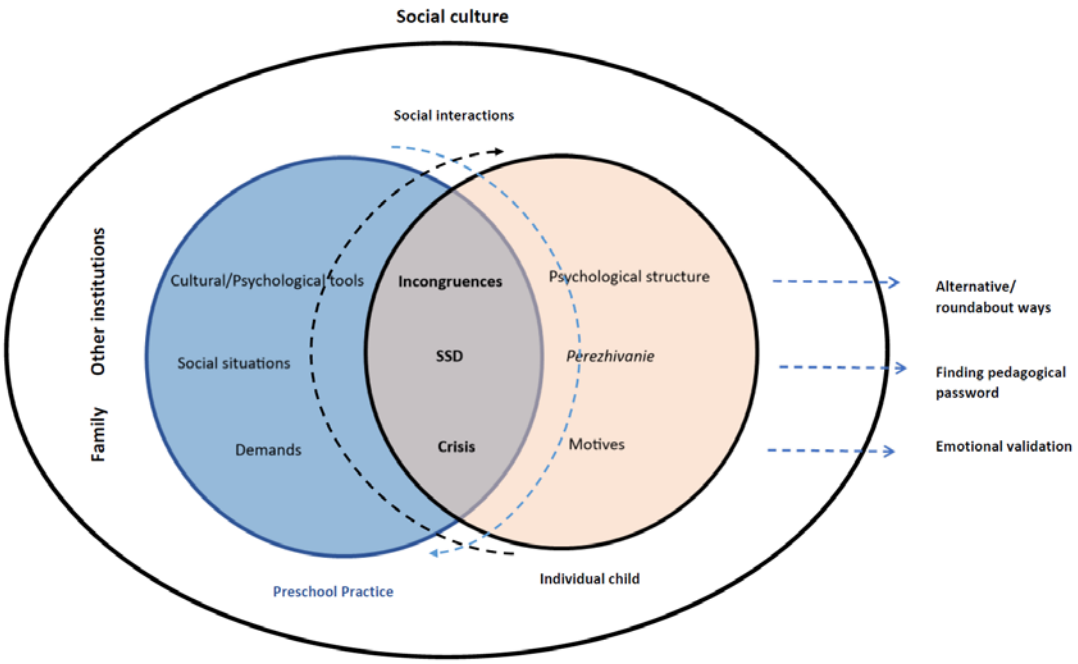

Figure 10.15: Cultural-historical model of inclusive preschool practice

One, educators should analyse the dialectical interplay between the child's motives and preschool demands to identify emerging crisis. Two, educators should explore the relationship between the child's *perezhivanie* (nexus of personal states which refract the influence of social situation) and social situation of the preschool practice to find out the Social Situation of Development (SSD). Three, educators should explore whether there is any incongruence between the child's psychological structure and culturally available psychological tools (e.g., language, number system, signs). The concepts included in the model and their dialectical relationship has been discussed in Chapter 5 to Chapter 8 with supporting evidence.

The analysis of these three aspects will guide educators to create appropriate developmental conditions for the individual child. For instance, if educators identify any incongruence, they should create alternative/roundabout ways for the child in collaboration with family and other relevant institutions. This cultural-historical understanding of incongruences and secondary disabilities will be helpful for educators to support participation of any children,

with or without diagnosis. Understanding the child's Social Situation of Development (SSD) will guide educators to employ appropriate pedagogy for the child. In addition to the holistic understanding of the child's actions in relation to the preschool practice, emotional support through the process of emotional validation can transform any crisis into developmental possibilities. It is also essential to examine broader social values, family practices and other institutions' practices (Hedegaard, 2008a, 2012) for understanding as well as supporting inclusive practice in preschool settings.

Whereas the medical model focuses on disability as the individual's problem and the social model sheds light on environmental barriers, the cultural-historical model emphasises understanding the interplay between the individual and the social practices to create developmental possibilities for a child with disability. For example, the cultural-historical model of inclusive preschool practice suggests examining the relation between institutional practice (here preschool) and the individual child from three different angles.

The cultural historical model is explained here with the example of Toby's participation in the preschool. The cultural-historical model suggests that the educators need to understand the incongruences Toby was experiencing around his disability. Toby was experiencing these incongruences due to the absence of his verbal communication. In this case, the preschool, other supporting organization and families need to work on to offer the child an alternative communication system so that he can express himself in social interactions to a greater degree. In everyday participation in the preschool, Toby had to deal with demands in preschool practice and a crisis arose when demands were conflicting with his motives. The child should be supported while he/she experiences crisis so that the situation leads to developmental possibilities. Above all, the child's social situation of development should be analysed, which will guide educators

towards finding the best ways to facilitate the child's participation in the preschool practice. For Toby, the preschool teacher choose a "greater we" position and involved him in activities.

I would like to argue that the cultural-historical model will promote rethinking for inclusive practice. Moreover, it will guide educators to create contextual, child-centred and needs-based conditions rather than disability-based general formulas and recipes (see Forlin et al., 2013, p. 18).

Contributions of this study

Historically, disability has been viewed as an individual's problem. As a consequence, institutional practices have tried to fix the child's problem while ignoring the child's general health, ability and interests and the contexts the child participates in. Use of the cultural-historical theoretical lenses opens possibilities for this study to understand disability as the dialectic between individual difference and social situations across institutions.

First, this study advances the cultural-historical concept of an alternative way of development and relevant auxiliary tools to support the cultural development of children with disabilities. This study found that not only cultural artefacts (e.g., wheelchair, hearing aid) and systems of communications can be used as auxiliary tools, but also other participants in the social situations can act as an auxiliary tool (living auxiliary tool) through their supportive actions (auxiliary questioning). Second, using the concept of primary and secondary disability, this study explained empirical evidence and suggested identifying the *pedagogical password*, which will allow educators to provide children's need-oriented support rather than labelling or category-oriented (e.g., autism, cerebral palsy) support. Third, this study found the conflicting interplay between the child's motive and the social demand could reach better resolution by considering the process of emotional validation of the child. Fourth, this study conceptualised the

importance of finding the unique social situation of a child with disability, which should be understood not only in relation to the child's impairment but also in relation to the child's social position, child's awareness about the social situation, and child's emotional attachment to the situation. Finally, it is argued that children's impairments should be considered as demographic information and educators should identify incongruences appearing in social situations for the child, child's strengths, motive, social situation of development and create alternative or roundabout ways of development if the child has such needs.

This study designed a pre-observation phase before conducting the video recorded observation, which is not widely reported in the literature. This pre-observation phase worked as ice-breaking between the researchers and the preschool practice and rapport building. Rapport building and knowing the preschool practice was beneficial for the researcher role as a participant-observer. This study also employed a dialectical strategy in participant selection as it included the children without disabilities as well, to better understand the participation of children with disabilities. Therefore, the pre-observation method and the dialectical strategy of participant selection should be considered as methodological contribution in the field of inclusive education research.

Furthermore, this study could be a platform for professionals and educators to rethink disability and inclusion of children with disabilities using cultural-historical lenses beyond the medical model and social model. This study therefore developed the cultural-historical model of inclusive preschool practice. Above all, the empirical evidence will generate relevance for practices and guide in how to focus on the possibilities rather than on an individual's problem.

Recommendations for future research

From the literature review to reporting findings, the need for further studies on participation of children with disabilities was felt significantly. This study is an endeavour to explore the inclusive practice in Australian mainstream preschools from a cultural-historical viewpoint. This is a small scale study where data were collected from one preschool setting and the study is limited in generalising its findings. The work was also unable to capture children's participation in the family context and could not capture parents' perspectives, which is a significant limitation of this study. Therefore, further studies are recommend to capture more holistic understanding of participation of children with disabilities across different institutions.

The theoretical concepts emerging from this study should be studied in different contexts to expand the understanding and practices of the theoretical knowledge. For example, in this study, auxiliary questioning facilitated participation of the focus child, Maliha. Future studies should be designed to explore to what extent auxiliary questioning can be beneficial for children with language difficulties in different contexts. Similarly, research should explore how analysing the child's Social Situation of Development (SSD) can assist educators to find a pedagogical password for a child's development in different contexts.

Professional development is crucial for teachers and educators to reduce barriers and facilitate inclusive education practice. This study's findings indicate more studies are needed to explore the pre-service teachers' preparedness and in-service teachers' continuous professional development opportunities and participation of preschool teachers in those development programs. This study also suggests that preschool teachers may take initiatives for action research using video observation and other methods.

Grounded in cultural-historical theory and following Hedegaard's (2012) holistic approach, this study explains how the other institutional practices and social values and practices

influence the participation of children in preschool settings. The findings indicate that many administrative and collaborative aspects should be explored in depth for the sake of better inclusive practice in Australian preschools. Research needs to be undertaken to explore the existing process of early intervention and to ensure need based and timely accessible funding processes.

Collaboration among different stakeholders is important for inclusive education practice. The findings of this study indicate further studies are needed to explore collaboration between parents and teachers and how to improve their trust, communication and negotiation. Further research is also required to explore collaborative practices among the special intervention team, service providers and preschools.

Implications

Inclusive education is not so much an historical event as a quarter-century journey, if we count the Salamanca statement and framework of actions (UNESCO, 1994) as a departure point. All individuals and all communities (local, national and global) have to practice, reflect and learn inclusion from their respective positions. The findings of this study have significant implications for inclusive preschool practice. Most importantly, this study will guide practitioners to rethink disability and inclusion from the cultural-historical understanding. This finding of the study will guide educators to focus on secondary disabilities rather than focusing on biological disabilities. The findings will inspire educators to consider child perspective and the child's strengths in order to facilitate participation of children with disabilities.

For policy makers, this study's findings suggest the necessity to ensure need based funding which is accessible in a timely manner. Similarly, the early intervention services should be planned and implemented as soon as the need/s are identified. As the early intervention and education are

overseen by two different bodies (ECIA and ECA) in Australia, strong collaboration and faster service should be considered. Moreover, policy makers should pay attention to the professional development of pre-service and in-service early childhood teachers and translate the philosophical shift from the medical model to the cultural-historical model into practice.

Concluding words

Despite the acceptance of inclusive education in global and national policies, inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream institutes continues to be challenging. Addressing the gap in understanding participation of children with disabilities in mainstream settings, this study aimed to explore the participation of children with disabilities in Australian mainstream preschools. The cultural-historical framing of this study and its findings have created a new line of understanding of disability and participation of children with disabilities. The research has found the conditions created in the preschool practice were experienced differently by each of the four focus children, and identified strengths and weakness of the practice for the full participation of children with disabilities. In addition, a cultural-historical model of inclusive preschool practice has been developed to show what aspects should be analysed to support participation of children with disabilities. This study suggests considering the biological difference or primary disability as a demographical information and facilitating the inclusion of a child with disability “as a child”. Considering this study as one of the early steps, further studies are recommended to expand the cultural-historical understanding and its implications for practice. This study recommends rethinking our current inclusive practice, which is heavily influenced by the medical model, and future strategies to ensure participation of all children in a mainstream preschool setting.

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(Note: The references from published and submitted papers which are presented in Chapter 5, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 are not included here as each of those papers has separate reference list.)

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethics Approval from Monash University

MONASH University

Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee

Approval Certificate

This is to certify that the project below was considered by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee. The Committee was satisfied that the proposal meets the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* and has granted approval.

Project Number: 5586
Project Title: Inclusive Education:Participation of Children with Disabilities in Australian Mainstream Preschools
Chief Investigator: Professor Marilyn Fleer
Expiry Date: 14/02/2022

Terms of approval - failure to comply with the terms below is in breach of your approval and the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*.

1. The Chief Investigator is responsible for ensuring that permission letters are obtained, if relevant, before any data collection can occur at the specified organisation.
2. Approval is only valid whilst your hold a position at Monash University.
3. It is responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by MUHREC.
4. You should notify MUHREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must include your project number.
6. Amendments to approved projects including changes to personnel must not commence without written approval from MHUREC.
7. Annual Report - continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report.
8. Final Report - should be provided at the conclusion of the project. MUHREC should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected completion date.
9. Monitoring - project may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by MUHREC at any time.
10. Retention and storage of data - The Chief Investigator is responsible fo the storage and retention of the original data pertaining to the project for a minimum period of five years.

Thank you for your assistance.

Professor Nip Thomson

Chair, MUHREC

CC: Assoc Professor Nikolay Veresov, Ms Fatema Johora, Ms Andi Marzuki

List of approved documents:

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Explanatory Statement	1. Explan Statement_FAMILIES_Taj	04/01/2017	1
Explanatory Statement	2. Explan Statement_FOCUS FAMILIES_Taj	04/01/2017	1
Explanatory Statement	3. Explan Statement_ Staff_Taj	04/01/2017	1
Consent Form	1. Consent_ FAMILIES_Taj	04/01/2017	1
Consent Form	2. Consent_ FOCUS FAMILIES_Taj	04/01/2017	1
Consent Form	3.Consent_ Staff_Taj	04/01/2017	1
Explanatory Statement	1. Explan Statement_FAMILIES_Taj	10/02/2017	Revised
Explanatory Statement	2. Explan Statement_FOCUS FAMILIES_Taj	10/02/2017	Revised
Explanatory Statement	3. Explan Statement_ Staff_Taj	10/02/2017	Revised

Page 1 of 1

Appendix 2: Ethics Approval from the Department

Department of
Education & Training

2 Treasury Place
East Melbourne Victoria 3002
Telephone: 03 9637 2000
DX210083

2017_003316

Ms Fatema Taj Johora
Faculty of Education
Monash University
29 Ancora Imparo Way
CLAYTON 3800

Dear Ms Johora

Thank you for your application of 14 February 2017 in which you request permission to conduct research in Victorian early childhood settings titled *Inclusive Education: Participation of Children with Disabilities in Australian Mainstream Preschools.*

I am pleased to advise that on the basis of the information you have provided your research proposal is approved in principle subject to the conditions detailed below.

1. The research is conducted in accordance with the final documentation you provided to the Department of Education and Training.

2. Separate approval for the research needs to be sought from centre directors. This is to be supported by the Department of Education and Training approved documentation and, if applicable, the letter of approval from a relevant and formally constituted Human Research Ethics Committee.

3. The project is commenced within 12 months of this approval letter and any extensions or variations to your study, including those requested by an ethics committee must be submitted to the Department of Education and Training for its consideration before you proceed.

4. As a matter of courtesy, you advise the relevant Regional Director of the schools or governing body of the early childhood settings that you intend to approach. An outline of your research and a copy of this letter should be provided to the Regional Director or governing body.

5. You acknowledge the support of the Department of Education Training in any publications arising from the research.

6. The Research Agreement conditions, which include the reporting requirements at the conclusion of your study, are upheld. A reminder will be sent for reports not submitted by the study's indicative completion date.

VICTORIA State Government

I wish you well with your research. Should you have further questions on this matter, please contact Youla Michaels, Project Support Officer, Insights and Evidence Branch, by telephone on (03) 9637 2707 or by email at michaels.youla.y@edumail.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Joyce Cleary
Director
Insights and Evidence

23/03/2017

VICTORIA
State Government

Appendix 3: Explanatory Statement for Families

MONASH University
Education

Explanatory Statement – Families

Title: Project Number 5586: **Inclusive Education: Participation of Children with Disabilities in Australian Mainstream Preschools**

Chief Investigator: Professor Marilyn Fleer
Faculty of Education
Phone: 03 99044235
email: marilyn.fleer@monash.edu

Co-investigator: Assoc Prof Nikolai Veresov
Faculty of Education
Phone: 03 99044638
email: nikolai.veresov@monash.edu

Student Researcher: Fatema Taj Johora
Faculty of Education
Phone: 03 99052784
Email: fatema.johora@monash.edu

Dear Parent/Guardian

We are writing to you regarding the above mentioned research project which will contribute to the student researcher's PhD study, under the supervision of Professor Marilyn Fleer (chief investigator) and Associate Professor Nikolai Veresov (co-investigator) in the Faculty of Education, Monash University. We would like to invite you to take part in this study. The preschool director kindly passed on this letter to you, but he/she is not involved in the study. Before taking your decision, please read the explanatory statement and discuss the research with your family.

Our research project aims to study how children, particularly children with disabilities, participate in Australian mainstream preschools. In order to better understand how children with disabilities effectively participate in preschool, we need to know more about the context and ways in which all children participate in the preschool setting, their interaction and relationship with their peers and teachers.

This study has been designed to observe all the children in the preschool setting and primarily analyse the interaction and participation of the children with disabilities. Therefore, it is important to observe children with disabilities as they participate in different activities and interact with their peers and teachers in their preschool setting. You can explain to your child that the researcher will come to the preschool to video record and photograph their participation in different activities. We would like to request you to seek your child's assent for his/her participation in this project. Please, see the attachment with this letter.

The participation in this study is voluntary and there is no obligation to consent for participation. However, if you consent to participate, you are free to withdraw from further participation at any stage during data collection. Data will be collected over a six month period. At the very beginning, the student researcher will visit preschool to build rapports with student, teachers and staff, and she will make field notes. The student researcher will make a video observation schedule consulting with the preschool teacher.

This project seeks your child's involvement as either a:

i) focus child whose activities will be closely observed, video recorded and photographed; or,

ii) child who may be interacting with the focus child, and as such, will be video recorded and photographed as s/he plays and interacts with the focus child in the preschool setting

Please note that in consultation with the teacher, 3-5 children will be selected as focus children. In addition to the video observations and photographs, we will also draw upon everyday teacher and child documents that are generated in the preschool, such as your child's portfolio, attendance records, and art work.

Children's photographs and images (not video) may be published in journal articles, books and other printed forms. From the video data, short video clips may be used in presentations for academic and professional development purposes (e.g., conference, classroom teaching) in the field of education. During or after your participation, you can change your mind about the use of data in above mentioned form or withdraw data, simply by contacting and informing the researchers, no later than six months after the data collection is over.

Data will be stored following the Monash University regulations in regard to research data storage and retention. All data (including electronic/digital data) will be recorded in a durable and retrievable form and kept locked in a cabinet for ten years in university premises.

If you have any queries or would like to be informed of the aggregate research findings, please contact any of the researcher as mentioned above.

If you have any concern about the research, please mention the number of the project 5586 and contact:

Executive Officer
Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)
Room 111, Building 3e
Research Office
Monash University VIC 3800
Tel: +61 3 9905 2052 Email: muhrec@monash.edu Fax: +61 3 9905 3831

If you agree to participate, please keep this letter for your records and complete and return the attached consent form to the collection box at the entrance to the preschool for me to collect.

Thank you for your time and for considering involvement in our study of child development and inclusion.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted] [redacted] [redacted]

Fatema Taj Johora Professor Marilyn Fleer Assoc Prof Nikolai Veresov

January 2017

STATEMENT OF CHILD ASSENT

YOU CAN USE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT TO EXPLAIN THE PROJECT TO YOUR CHILD:

Someone who does research with children is coming to your centre soon and she would like to find out more about how children play and learn. She will use a video camera to film children playing and working.

You can choose whether you would like to talk to her or not.

If you choose to talk to her you can change your mind at any time, she won't mind. You can circle or colour on one of these faces to show how you feel about talking to her.

Date:…….....

Child's Name :…….....

Date of Birth:…….....

PLEASE RETURN THIS SHEET TO YOUR CHILD'S CLASSROOM TEACHER.

Appendix 4: Consent Form for Families

Informed Consent Form for Parents/Guardians

Project Number: 5586: **Inclusive Education: Participation of Children with Disabilities in Australian Mainstream Preschools**

NOTE: Signed written consent will remain with the Monash University researchers for their records.

I agree that my child may take part in the above named Monash University project. The project has been explained to me and I have read the Explanatory Statement, which I keep for my records.

I understand that in agreeing to take part in this project, that I am willing (please tick):

☐ for my child to be videotaped and photographed at preschool/childcare

☐ for my child to participate in this study if she/he is selected as a focus child based on the study criteria

☐ to give access to my child's portfolio, art works and attendance records for research purposes

At the end of field work, the researcher would like to use the words and images collected from this project for different purposes. I give permission for my child's images and words to be used in (please tick):

☐ a doctoral thesis

☐ a scholarly journal articles or book chapters

☐ conference presentations

☐ poster presentations

☐ teaching in undergraduate coursework programs regarding children's development

☐ selected images/words stored/shown electronically (e.g. form of digital doctoral thesis; teaching materials)

I also understand that (please tick):

☐ my child may be identifiable, though all practical measures will be taken to avoid this.

☐ images will be in the form of video sequences, still photographs, descriptive reports and scholarly discussion limited to the field of education or relevant debate among educational professionals who may be interested in new research about child development, inclusion, disability.

☐ the video data and other photographic recordings will be stored by the university researchers in a secure place on the university's premises, for a period of ten years after the conclusion to the research, with the proviso that access to this recorded data will only be provided in the context of scholarly presentations or university study. There will not be a provision for open public access to this recorded data and I am providing consent only to the researchers' use of this material for the sake of enhancing knowledge within the field of education.

☐ recorded video and other photographic data may be selected for public access i.e., with the understanding that "public access" will always mean scholarly or professional discussions in the field of education, including in an on-line context for educational purposes.

☐ I understand that I can stop participating any time I wish and that I can email the researcher requesting to view the images of my child. If I change my mind about the use of the data for the

purposes listed above I can contact the researcher and the data will not be used for any future purposes. However, I cannot withdraw data retrospectively after 6 months.

Child's name ……..

Date of birth: ……

Parents'/Guardians' names/ ……

Signature of Parent/Legal Representative:……

Phone or/and email: ……

……..

Address (optional): ……..

……

……

Date:……..

Appendix 5: Explanatory Statement for Home Visit

MONASH University
Education

Explanatory Statement – Families for Home Visit

Title: Project Number:5586: **Inclusive Education: Participation of Children with Disabilities in Australian Mainstream Preschools**

Chief Investigator: Professor Marilyn Fleer
Faculty of Education
Phone: 03 99044235
email: marilyn.fleer@monash.edu

Co-investigator: Assoc Prof Nikolai Veresov
Faculty of Education
Phone: 03 99044638
email: nikolai.veresov@monash.edu

Student Researcher : Fatema Taj Johora
Faculty of Education
Phone: 03 99052784
Email: fatema.johora@monash.edu

Dear Parent/Guardian

We are writing to you regarding the above mentioned research project which will contribute to the student researcher's PhD study, under the supervision of Professor Marilyn Fleer (chief investigator) and Associate Professor Nikolai Veresov (co-investigator) in the Faculty of Education, Monash University. We would like to thank you for participating in this study and we are inviting you for further participation. At this stage, we would like to get your permission for a home visit to interview parents/guardians and observe the child in everyday home settings. The preschool director kindly passed on this letter to you, but he/she is not involved in the study. Before taking your decision, please read the explanatory statement and discuss with your family.

You have already informed that our research project aims to study how children without disabilities and children with disabilities participate in Australian mainstream preschools. In order to better understand child's participation in preschool we also would like to know how the child participates in home context. You can explain to your child that the researcher will come to home to video record and photograph their participation in different activities.

The student researcher and a research assistant will visit your home maximum 1-2 hours at a time convenient to you and your family during the data collection period. Your child's everyday activities will be observed and video recorded in a natural home context. Therefore, other members of your family may be captured in the video recording. We ask that you explain the study to your family and where appropriate, for any adult likely to be present during the data gathering to also complete the consent form.

In order to understand key family practices that are important to your family, we would also like to interview you and your child together. This will be recorded. A maximum of three home visits are planned during data collection period and every visit will be maximum 1-2 hours long or can be modified based on negotiation.

Your further participation in this study is voluntary and there is no obligation to consent for participation. However, if you consent to participate, you are free to withdraw from participation at any stage during data collection.

Children's and your photographs and images (not video) may be published in journal articles, books and other printed forms. From the video data, short video clips may be used in presentations for academic and professional development purposes (e.g., conference, classroom teaching) in the field of education. During or after your participation, you can change your mind about the use of data in above mentioned form or withdraw data, simply by contacting and informing the researchers, no later than six months after the data collection is over.

Data will be stored following the Monash University regulations in regard to research data storage and retention. All data (including electronic/digital data) will be recorded in a durable and retrievable form and kept locked in a cabinet for ten years in university premises.

If you have any queries or would like to be informed of the aggregate research findings, please contact any of the researcher as mentioned above.

If you have any concern about the research, please mention the number of the project 5586 and contact:

Executive Officer
Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)
Room 111, Building 3e
Research Office
Monash University VIC 3800
Tel: +61 3 9905 2052 Email: muhrec@monash.edu Fax: +61 3 9905 3831

If you agree to participate, please keep this letter for your records and complete and return the attached consent form to the collection box at the entrance to the preschool for me to collect.

Thank you for your time and for considering involvement in our study of child development and inclusion.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted] [redacted] [redacted]

Fatema Taj Johora Professor Marilyn Fleer Assoc Prof Nikolai Veresov

Appendix 6: Consent Form for Home Visit

Informed Consent Form for Home Visit

Project Number: 5586: **Inclusive Education: Participation of Children with Disabilities in Australian Mainstream Preschools**

NOTE: Signed written consent will remain with the Monash University researchers for their records.

I agree that the researcher may visit home to collect further data for the above named Monash University project. The project has been explained to me and I have read the Explanatory Statement, which I keep for my records.

I understand that in agreeing to take part in this project, that I am willing (please tick):

☐ for me and my family members to be videotaped and photo graphed at home

☐ for me and my child to be interviewed and videotaped at home

At the end of field work, the researcher would like to use the words and images collected from this project for different purposes. I give permission for my child's images and words to be used in (please tick):

☐ a doctoral thesis

☐ a scholarly journal articles or book chapters

☐ conference presentations

☐ poster presentations

☐ teaching in undergraduate coursework programs regarding children's development

☐ selected images/words stored/shown electronically (e.g. form of digital doctoral thesis; teaching materials)

I also understand that (please tick):

☐ my child, me and other family members may be identifiable, though all practical measures will be taken to avoid this.

☐ images will be in the form of video sequences, still photographs, descriptive reports and scholarly discussion limited to the field of education or relevant debate among educational professionals who may be interested in new research about child development, inclusion, disability.

☐ the video data and other photographic recordings will be stored by the university researchers in a secure place on the university's premises, for a period of ten years after the conclusion to the research, with the proviso that access to this recorded data will only be provided in the context of scholarly presentations or university study. There will not be a provision for open public access to this recorded data and I am providing consent only to the researchers' use of this material for the sake of enhancing knowledge within the field of education.

☐ recorded video and other photographic data may be selected for public access i.e., with the understanding that "public access" will always mean scholarly or professional discussions in the field of education, including in an on-line context for educational purposes.

☐ I understand that I can stop participating any time I wish and that I can email the researcher requesting to view the images of me or my child. If I change my mind about the use of the data for the purposes listed above I can contact the researcher and the data will not be used for any future purposes. However, I cannot withdraw data retrospectively after 6 months.

Child's name ……

Date of birth: ……

Parents'/Guardians' names/ ……

Signature of Parent/Legal
Representative:……

Phone or/and email: ……

……

Address (optional): ……

……

……

Date:……

Appendix 7: Explanatory Statement for Staff

MONASH University
Education

Explanatory Statement – Staff

Project Number 5586: **Inclusive Education: Participation of Children with Disabilities in Australian Mainstream Preschools**

Chief Investigator: Professor Marilyn Fleer
Faculty of Education
Phone: 03 99044235
email: marilyn.fleer@monash.edu

Co-investigator: Assoc Prof Nikolai Veresov
Faculty of Education
Phone: 03 99044638
email: nikolai.veresov@monash.edu

Student Researcher: Fatema Taj Johora
Faculty of Education
Phone: 03 99052784
Email: fatema.johora@monash.edu

Dear Colleagues

We are writing to you regarding the above mentioned research project which will contribute to the student researcher's PhD study, under the supervision of Professor Marilyn Fleer (chief investigator) and Associate Professor Nikolai Veresov (co-investigator) in the Faculty of Education, Monash University. We would like to invite you to take part in this study. The preschool director kindly passed on this letter to you, but he/she is not involved in the study. Before taking your decision, please read the explanatory statement.

Our research project aims to study how children, particularly children with disabilities, participate in Australian mainstream preschools. In order to better understand how children with disabilities effectively participate in preschool, we need to know more about the context and ways in which all children participate in the preschool setting, their interaction and relationship with their peers and teachers.

This study has been designed to observe all the children in the preschool setting and primarily analyse the interaction and participation of the children with disabilities. Therefore, it is important to observe children with disabilities as they participate in different activities and interact with their peers and teachers in their preschool setting. We anticipate that this study will make a significant contribution to understanding the inclusion process of all children with diverse abilities.

We are going to observe and video record 3-5 focus children of preschool in the everyday setting of the preschool. Therefore, other children and teachers/staff in the preschool will be captured in the video records too. Moreover, we would like to interview teachers and relevant staff about practices they believe are important for inclusion. The interview will be recorded. Single or a series of interviews are anticipated during the observation period. However, each staff will be interviewed for no more than 1.5 hours in total. Data will be collected over a six month period. At the very beginning, the student researcher will visit the preschool to build rapports with the children, teachers and staff and she will make field notes. The student researcher will make a video observation schedule consulting with the teacher. We would also like to view some of the everyday documents that are gathered already as part of the teaching process, such as, attendance records, preschool policies, student's portfolio, art works, etc., for further analysis.

We are seeking your permission to be video observed during your day-to-day interactions with the focus children during the everyday activities already planned in the preschool. We would also like to informally interview you about the children's participation and inclusion. We believe that your participation in our study will contribute to better understanding the practice in the preschool and the possibilities for enhancing inclusion of all children with diverse abilities and children's development.

The participation in this study is voluntary and there is no obligation to consent for participation. However, if you consent to participate, you are free to withdraw from further participation at any stage during data collection.

Some photographs and images (not video) may be published in journal articles, books and other printed forms. From the video data, short video clips may be used in presentations for academic and professional development purposes (e.g., conference, classroom teaching) in the field of education. During or after your participation, you can change your mind about the use of data in above mentioned form or withdraw data, simply by contacting and informing the researchers, no later than six months after the data collection is over.

Data will be stored following the Monash University regulations in regard to research data storage and retention. All data (including electronic/digital data) will be recorded in a durable and retrievable form and kept locked in a cabinet for ten years in university premises.

If you have any queries or would like to be informed of the aggregate research findings, please contact any of the researcher as mentioned above.

If you have any concern about the research, please mention the number of the project 5586 and contact:

Executive Officer
Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)
Room 111, Building 3e
Research Office
Monash University VIC 3800
Tel: +61 3 9905 2052 Email: muhrec@monash.edu Fax: +61 3 9905 3831

If you agree to participate, please keep this letter for your records and complete and return the attached consent form to the collection box at the entrance to the preschool for me to collect.

Thank you for your time and for considering involvement in our study of child development and inclusion.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted] [redacted] [redacted]

Fatema Taj Johora Professor Marilyn Fleer Assoc Prof Nikolai Veresov

January 2017

Appendix 8: Consent Form for Staff

Informed Consent Form for Staff

Project Number: 5586: Inclusive Education: Participation of Children with Disabilities in Australian Mainstream Preschools

NOTE: Signed written consent will remain with the Monash University researchers for their records.

I agree to take part in the above named Monash University project. The project has been explained to me and I have read the Explanatory Statement, which I keep for my records.

I understand that in agreeing to take part in this project, that I am willing (please tick):

☐ to be video taped at preschool/childcare (as relevant)

☐ to be interviewed about my teaching program

☐ to share relevant planning and teaching documentation

☐ to give permission to access the focus children's portfolio, attendance record, art works (with family consent only) and the preschool/centre program plan and policy

Upon completion of this project, the researcher would like to use the words, images and video clips collected from this project for different purposes. I give permission for my images and words to be used in (please tick):

☐ a doctoral thesis

☐ a scholarly journal articles or book chapters

☐ conference presentations

☐ poster presentations

☐ teaching in undergraduate coursework programs regarding children's development

☐ selected images/words stored/shown electronically (e.g. form of digital doctoral thesis; teaching materials)

I also understand (please tick) that:

☐ I may be identifiable, though all practical measures will be taken to avoid this.

☐ images will be in the form of video sequences, still photographs, descriptive reports and scholarly discussion limited to the field of education or relevant debate among educational professionals who may be interested in new research about child development, inclusion, disability.

☐ the video data and other photographic recordings will be stored by the university researchers in a secure place on the university's premises, for a period of ten years after the conclusion to the research, with the proviso that access to this recorded data will only be provided in the context of scholarly presentations or university study. There will not be a provision for open public access to this recorded data and I am providing consent only to the researchers' use of this material for the sake of enhancing knowledge within the field of education.

☐ recorded video and other photographic data may be selected for public access i.e., with the understanding that "public access" will always mean scholarly or professional discussions in the field of education, including in an on-line context for educational purposes.

☐ I understand that I can stop participating any time I wish and that I can email the researcher requesting to view the images of me. If I change my mind about the use of the data for the purposes listed

above I can contact the researcher and the data will not be used for any future purposes. However, I cannot withdraw data retrospectively after 6 months.

Name ……..

Signature:……

Phone or/and email: ……

……..

Address (optional): ……..

……

……

Date:……..

Appendix 9: Details of Staff Participation

Sl.	Name	Position, qualification and experience in ECEC	Types of data collection	Experience with children with disabilities
1	Jane	Director/owner Certificate three And Diploma	Video observation Video interview	Yes, as an educator she met children with disabilities
2	Monica	Preschool Teacher Bachelor (Honours) degree	Video observation Video interview	Yes, she has a son with autism and as an educator met children with disabilities.
3	Amanda	Teacher Assistance Diploma	Video observation Video interview	No
4	Lisa	Teacher Assistance Certificate three Diploma (continuing; nearly finished)	Video observation Video interview	Yes, she has relative with autism and as an educator met children with disabilities.
5	Tracey	Cognitive behaviour therapist Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) Training	Video observation Video interview	Yes, she has a son with autism and as a therapist met children with disabilities.
6	Azra	Educator Certificate III Diploma (continuing)	Video observation Video interview	No
7	Ming	Placement/(pre-service) Teacher Master degree student	Video observation Video interview	No
8	Susan	Educator	Video observation	N/A
9	Anita	Educator	Video observation	N/A
10	Alia	Placement Teacher	Video observation	N/A
11	Thi	Placement Teacher	Video observation	N/A
12	Shaila	Director/owner	Video observation	N/A
13	Shamima	Placement Teacher	Video observation	N/A
14	Zoe	Placement Teacher	Video observation	N/A
15	Emma	Placement Teacher	Video observation	N/A
16	Sonia	Placement Teacher	Video observation	N/A