# Gifted education for infants and toddlers in Aotearoa New Zealand: An insight into exemplary practice

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the

Degree

of Master of Education

in the University of Canterbury

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**University of Canterbury**

**2015**

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# Contents

# Abstract

This investigation utilises a Foucauldian lens to analyse constructs of exemplary practice promoted by the gifted and early childhood communities of Aotearoa New Zealand. The study considers how the discourses promoted by these communities are contested or employed by the teachers nominated as exemplary. Power relationships between adults, children and government are explored.

Historical and contemporary developments in early childhood education and giftedness are investigated. Attention is paid to competing depictions of the infant, the toddler and giftedness. Dominant discourses and discursive images within international research literature are analysed and repositioned in relation to the Foucauldian oeuvre of the study.

Within the findings it is argued that the construction of the term 'exemplary' is informed by discourses of giftedness, a developmental discourse, an 'expert' discourse and a neoliberal discourse. The governance of giftedness and gifted education is identified as crucial to the construction of the term exemplary within Aotearoa New Zealand. The notions of 'rights', 'social justice' and 'empowerment' are problematised, and the dominance of the discursive image of the child as 'confident and competent' in relation to giftedness is queried.

Possibilities for further conversations between early childhood teachers and researchers on the concept of giftedness are explored. The role of the government and of teachers in taking opportunities to promote situational change, with the best interests of gifted children in mind, is considered.

# Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to my supervisors Professor Peter Roberts and Dr Sonja Macfarlane for their advice, patience, and generosity in the writing of this study. Without your guidance, I would not have completed this thesis.

I am also very grateful to my original supervisor and friend, the late Professor Judith Duncan, who passed away over the course of this study, and who gave so much of her precious time to guide me onto the right path with my research. Judith, you will always be with me as I continue to do the best I can for children's learning.

To my participants, your passion in your teaching and care for children's learning shines through in this thesis. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share your experiences with the world.

To my family, Mom, Dad, Ang, Alan, Rie, Rebe, Moo-moo, Jimmy-boy, Ma, and Grandad, you supported me with endless babysitting, afternoon teas and words of encouragement when my focus was lost. Thank you for all you have done.

Finally, to my wonderful husband, Dr Simeon Smaill, my daughter Loretta who tried to add a few of her own words while sitting on my lap as I worked, and my daughter Phoebe who came along right in the middle of it all, your encouragement and patience have inspired me to do the best I can. My sweetie, my sunshine, and my twinkle star, it's time for us now!

# Chapter One: Background and Outline of the Topic

## Introduction

Early childhood education is an everyday part of life for many children and families in Aotearoa New Zealand. The early years in a child's life are increasingly seen to be the most influential period upon the learning and development of the individual over the course of their life span (Mustard, 2006; New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1998; Sprenger, 2013) and social and governmental investment into early childhood education and care is viewed as more economically effective than later remedial measures (Barnett, 2008; Barnett & Nores, 2010; Heckman & Masterov, 2007; Springford, 2013; Stack, 2013). Barnett (2008) contends that investment into high quality education programmes in early childhood affects the individual's "school success, employment and earnings, delinquency and crime, family formation and fertility, and health" (p.9). These economic arguments impact upon governmental directives and policies aimed at increasing children's participation in early childhood education and care.

The most recent approximations estimate that 95.7% of children participate in early childhood education prior to school (National Party of New Zealand, 2014a). Higher participation levels are targeted through governmental strategies seeking to increase participation to as high as 98% by 2016 (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2014h). These governmental strategies influence parental decisions regarding child rearing practices by positioning participation in early childhood education settings external to the home environment as essential to children's future success (National Party of New Zealand, 2014b). Arguably in promoting participation within early childhood education settings, the government is liable in ensuring the provision of excellence in educational experiences. Governmental investment, through economic investment and ethical leadership is therefore

critical to ensure the 98% of children who will be involved in early childhood education are receiving excellence in education and care.

The government of Aotearoa New Zealand is party to the *United Nations convention on the rights of the child* (United Nations, 1989) and therefore bound by the principles of this document including article 29.1a which states, "Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential" (United Nations, 1989, p. 9). Through this document and other supporting documentation, quality education is positioned as a human rights issue (Committee on the rights of the child & United Nations, 2006; The consultative group on early childhood care and development, 2013; United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, United Nations Children's Fund, & Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2006). While not state mandated, early childhood educational policy within Aotearoa New Zealand designates early childhood education as a right for children, consequently if there are disparities in equity in early childhood education, the state is required to act to rectify this discrepancy (Quennerstedt, 2009).

As early childhood education is positioned as a necessity within the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, questions of equity in education are raised by inequitable governmental legislation and policies for infants and toddlers. Recent investigations into early childhood education for infants and toddlers by the Office of the Children's Commissioner query minimum regulatory standards which do not maintain excellence in education and care for infants and toddlers. High group sizes, ratios and the lack of teacher qualification requirements for teachers working with infant and toddlers results in many early childhood services providing low quality practice (Carroll-Lind & Angus, 2011). There are also problems regarding the comparative treatment of infants and toddlers to young children within early childhood education. Infants and toddlers are marginalised through their

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exclusion from highly subsidised early childhood education through the 20 Hours ECE policy (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2015a) which subsidises children aged three, four, or five to attend education and care settings for up to 20 hours a week at low or no cost to their parents. Consequently the promotion of early childhood education as a benefit for young children's future success appears to be legislatively aimed at older children. Infants and toddlers are marginalised through governmental strategies and regulations which minimise educational involvement and the excellence of educational provision. These limitations are further exacerbated for provision of education for infants and toddlers who are considered to be gifted.

Gifted education within Aotearoa New Zealand is highly contentious. The New Zealand Ministry of Education (hereafter known as NZMoE) promote a view of giftedness as a phenomenon which is "found in every classroom, and across all cultures and socio-economic groups" (New Zealand Ministry of Education, Bevan-Brown, & Taylor, 2008). However, colloquial perceptions of giftedness contest the view of the NZMOE. The concept of giftedness is contested within Aotearoa New Zealand (Moltzen, 2011b). Early childhood teachers within Aotearoa New Zealand hold a disparate range of views regarding gifted education for children (Keen, 2005). Teachers challenge the existence of this phenomenon outright or attested to all children being gifted (Keen, 2005; Margrain & Farquhar, 2011). As the NZMoE also supports a view of gifted learners as "those with exceptional abilities relative to most other people" (New Zealand Ministry of Education et al., 2008, p. 15) perceptions of all children or no children being gifted contest those promoted by the government. These contesting perceptions become problematic when the NZMoE advises parents who are interested or concerned about their child's gifted ability to consult their early childhood teacher, as they are situated those who "can also advise you about what to do next and provide contact details of those who can help if more support or information is needed"

(New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2015b). Educational practitioners who contend the actuality of giftedness have a large impact upon the learning and development of gifted children (Elhoweris, 2008; Hodge & Kemp, 2006; Lassig, 2009).

Researchers and theorists in gifted education assert the significance of the early childhood period in the life of a gifted individual (Colombo, Shaddy, Blaga, Anderson, & Kannass, 2009; Fatouros, 1986; Gelbrich, 1998; Harrison, 2003; Koshy & Robinson, 2006; McGee & Hughes, 2011; Murphy, 2005; Sankar-DeLeeuw, 2004; Silverman, 1992; Smutny, 2003; Walsh, Hodge, Bowes, & Kemp, 2010). Yet problems with equitable provision by the government for early childhood education are further exacerbated by discrepancies in gifted education. Governmental support of gifted education for primary and secondary school children is clearly represented by way of an in-depth web resource designed for gifted students, their teachers and families; a repository that is filled with support, information and research (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2014f). Additionally, in 2012, the NZMoE solicited the publication of a new handbook for primary and secondary teachers entitled *Gifted and talented students: meeting their needs in New Zealand schools* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2012a) which provides extensive information on curriculum delivery for gifted learners. Within early childhood education governmental guidance and support is minimal. Teachers and parents share a combined sector publication which devotes a small section to giftedness in early childhood (New Zealand Ministry of Education et al., 2008). Website support is also limited. A small section devoted to early childhood education is within the gifted education section of the Te Kete Ipurangi website; however this website is aimed at schools and few early childhood educators would seek information on this site. More extensive legislative direction and policy guidance is needed to provide equity in educational provision, which is the responsibility of the government to remedy (Quennerstedt, 2009).

Taking into consideration the varied views on giftedness and gifted education within the domain of early childhood, investigation into teachers who are nominated by gifted education communities and early childhood communities as exemplary providers of pedagogical practice for gifted infants and toddlers could present insights into their exemplary practice. Deconstruction of the concepts of giftedness and the notion of 'exemplary' practice will also be undertaken. As befitting the Foucauldian theoretical framework of this study, terms such as 'gifted', 'exemplary', and 'infant and toddler' will be problematised. However, as the usage of inverted commas throughout the study can be jarring upon the reader, and there are occasions when their usage is inappropriate, I have chosen to not present these terms in this manner. However, it is important to the oeuvre of this study that these terms are not considered to be a singular truth, nor an unquestioned actuality. Instead the negotiation and social construction of these terms are considered. This research will highlight the discourses that inform perceptions of giftedness and gifted education, and critically analyse the impact the governance of early childhood education has upon the experiences of children positioned as gifted. Complimentary and contesting discourses held by the teachers, the wider community, governmental documents and wider research will be discussed, compared and contrasted.

## Main Research Question

What is exemplary practice for the education of gifted infants and toddlers in Aotearoa New Zealand?

**The subsidiary questions for the research study.**

- How do exemplary teachers perceive giftedness and gifted education?

- How do exemplary teachers' perceptions inform identification of gifted infants and toddlers?

- How do these perceptions inform teacher's interpretation of *Te Whāriki: he whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early childhood curriculum* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) for gifted infants and toddlers?

- How does the wider community, including teachers, other education professionals and/or parents of gifted children perceive giftedness and gifted education?

**Research aims and objectives.**

The purpose of this research is to investigate the perceptions of teachers of gifted infants and toddlers who are positioned as exemplary by the wider public of Aotearoa New Zealand. The consideration of these teachers as exemplary, as they are so positioned by the gifted and early childhood communities of Aotearoa New Zealand, enables me to investigate how exemplary is discursively constructed within Aotearoa New Zealand. I will investigate how these teachers perceive giftedness and perceive gifted educational practice in order to unpack notions of exemplary within the Aotearoa New Zealand, and consider "What is exemplary practice in Aotearoa New Zealand for gifted infants and toddlers".

**Proposed outcomes of the research.**

While the formulation of a hypothesis is not consistent with the theoretical frame that guides this research, there are outcomes relating to what I hope to achieve by completing this research. By the completion of this study, I hope to highlight dominant discourses of giftedness within early childhood educational practice in Aotearoa New Zealand and problematise the relationship between the community's discursive image of the exemplary teacher of gifted infants and toddlers, and the teachers' image of their exemplary status. I also

seek to critically analyse perceptions of giftedness and gifted education held by the teachers who are positioned as exemplary and how these are supported or contested by wider social discourses.

By using the information gleaned from this research, it is hoped the discourses which inform teacher and community perceptions of exemplary pedagogical practice for gifted infants and toddlers will be made apparent, exposing power relations and the negotiation of public and private spaces. It is hoped by teasing out these discourse, other teachers can be made aware of the discourses and discursive images that inform gifted pedagogy for infants and toddlers, and implement positive change.

## Personal Interest

I am teacher of infants and toddlers with a particular interest in gifted education for all children; it is my aim to investigate how teachers of gifted infants and toddlers perceive gifted education.

As a young child, my inclusion within a gifted and talented programme in Hawaii from the age of 5 to 6 prompted the perception of myself as a gifted individual. The actuality of giftedness was accepted within my world, promoted by the educational programme I participated in. Upon moving to Aotearoa New Zealand at the age of 6 in 1983, the school I attended did not approach gifted education in the same way as the school in Hawaii. The educational documentation provided from Hawaii regarding my reading abilities were relegated in favour of a reading examination by the school. During this assessment, I was given a set of books to read out loud, and stumbled upon the word Magpie, having never been exposed to one in my life in Hawaii. I was placed in a class with children a year older than me; however I was later assessed to have the reading age of a twelve year old. Extension was provided within this school for my reading. We shifted to another city, which had no

opportunities for extension classes. I continued to read beyond my chronological age outside of school for some time, but did not persist when there were no external incentives. I did not think further about this phase of my life until I became a teacher.

When I was sixteen years old, my niece was born. She is also a highly gifted learner, with an extended reading age. My interactions with her reminded me of my early development. I enjoyed seeing her passion for learning, and enjoyment when she was challenged to do more. This inspired me to begin a career in early childhood education. I completed the Graduate Diploma in Teaching and Learning (Early Childhood) in 2001 at the Christchurch College of Education, after completing a Bachelor of Arts from University of Canterbury, majoring in the Dramatic Arts.

Over the course of my career I have worked in four private education and care centres, and one community based education and care centre. I have worked as a teacher in three centres, and managed two centres (one of which I helped to establish). I have taught children within all age settings of early childhood, and been privileged to teach in a variety settings that grouped children differently according to the philosophy of the centre. Consequently, after 13 years of teaching in a wide variety of early childhood settings, I believe I have a good knowledge of the experience of working in early childhood education and care.

My personal/professional philosophy is:

- To value every day and treasure every moment we spend with the children.

- To realise the importance of my role as a teacher, and the impact that I have upon the children's on-going understandings and interactions with the world around them. To be aware that these foundational relationships have the potential to affect them for the rest of their lives.

- To fully appreciate the intensity of the bond that I build with the children, and they build with me.

- To respect the interests of the children. To treat them with the dignity accorded to our fellow adults. To explain, negotiate and engage with them to show them that their wishes are esteemed and that they are co-constructors of their learning.

- To broaden our centre to fully include the new ideas, philosophies and cultural values of our families. Not simply let them know that they have a place here, but ensure they know that they have an equal partnership in the development of the centre.

- To engender the children with a passion for learning.

- To widen children's perspectives in order for them to appreciate their place within the global community.

- To ensure that children are developing an understanding of the special role that Māori people have as tangata whenua within Aotearoa New Zealand. To support the growth of te reo Māori, and respect for tikanga Māori.

- To build a solid foundation for my practice based on clear understandings of pedagogical theory and research.

My passion for gifted education has been re-ignited in my teaching, my marriage and through the raising of my daughters. I believe it is every child's right to feel fulfilled with their educational experience, it is the role of the teacher, the management and the government to ensure that this occurs. It is my wish, and the aim of my research to ensure that all children are empowered to set their goals for their educational satisfaction and to nurture their intrinsic passion for learning.

I have chosen this study due to my history of involvement with gifted education, and my passion to advocate for children. In my experience parents and early childhood teachers are interested in giftedness, but are uncertain what giftedness means. It is my intention to

critique power relationships which position infants and toddlers as lesser human beings. What I would consider to be giftedness is not frequently shared by others. I believe that infants and toddlers are individuals in their own right, and deserve to be afforded the same privileges as older individuals within Aotearoa New Zealand. I intend to dedicate the future of my career to ensuring infants and toddlers of all abilities are valued and respected.

## Contextual Setting for the Study

The power/knowledge dynamic as explored by Michel Foucault (1926-1984) is central to the theoretical framework of this thesis, and influences this investigation into the contextual setting of the research. Discourses are socially mediated beliefs or 'truths' which set a standard for behaviour and participation within the society in which they are constructed and utilised. Individuals' behaviours are normalised or threatened according to whether or not the individual adheres to these standards. Discursive practices and subject positions empower or subjugate individuals through their access or limitation to activities and opportunities within the society, and consequently, individuals lives are constricted according to whether they meet or reject these constructed societal norms (Foucault, 1971). Discourses and discursive practices stemming from the power/knowledge doublet influence educational provision within education and care centres in Aotearoa New Zealand (May, 2007).

**Early childhood education provision in Aotearoa New Zealand.**

Early childhood education and feminist concerns have been inextricably linked over the course of history (May, 1993). Discursive practices normalise behaviours (Foucault, 1979) shaping the subjectivities of women and children and influencing the resultant prospects offered to them within society. Discourses and discursive practices relating to women have

situated certain models of early childhood education as either acceptable or shunned. Shifting discursive images of women over history have altered discursive practices surrounding early childhood, yet historical discursive images are still influential within contemporary society. Over the course of this section, I will illustrate how historical early childhood discourses (particularly those relative to the education and care centre) influence current discursive practices. To target relevant discourses that apply to what are now known as education and care centres, only historical establishments which fit the particular characteristics of this form of early childhood education - allowing parents to leave infants, or children under three years old; leaving children over the course of a full day – are considered.

### *History of early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand.*

#### *Early philosophical underpinnings of early childhood education.*

The establishment of early forms of what is now known as education and care centres in Aotearoa New Zealand originated in Europe. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's (1712-1778) theories regarding child-rearing were influential in societal perceptions of the early education and care centre. Rousseau regarded it necessary for mothers to take the lead role in the raising of children, ideally within the home environment. The woman was discursively positioned as domesticated and inherently nurturing.

The establishment of infant schools in Britain in the 19th century appeared to contest this perspective, it was deemed necessary to educate young poor children outside of the home environment as they were likely to develop what the affluent considered a 'poor character' (Bradburn, 1966). Factory commissioners countered that reducing children's involvement in labour would promote children to get into mischief (Whitbread, 1972) but the infant schools were considered more appropriate to combat such concerns and reduce delinquency while

moulding the child to become a 'proper child' and future citizen. Within Europe and Britain, these early establishments were frequented by children of the lower classes, and avoided by the more affluent families (May, 2013), in favour of the more socially accepted private kindergarten (Prochner, 2009).

The earliest models of the infant school transported to Aotearoa New Zealand were governed by missionaries. While in England, generally children no younger than 3 attended the infant school, the Aotearoa New Zealand model enrolled children as young as eighteen months (May, 2013). The school reported participation of both European and Māori children and both genders within the combined classroom (May, 2013). Also contrary to English practice was the presence of Māori teachers who were reported to have taught within the schools in te reo, enabling Māori children to fully participate prior to learning English (May, 2013). The purpose of these missionary schools was to Europeanise and Christianise Māori children and to mould the child according to the vision of the educators (May, 2013). The educators in power positioned themselves as the purveyors of appropriate knowledge, and rejected other ways of knowing essential to the Māori people. This process that was continued by the Native School system, which superseded missionary run infant schools following signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 (May, 2013).

New trends in early education were emerging back in England. At the beginning of the 20th century, government funded infant schools were catering to 43% of all 3 and 4 year olds within Britain, but their strict educational focus and instruction methods were not appreciated by all adults. Charitable or church run nursery schools, which emphasised play over instruction, were established as an alternative to infant schools (May, 2013). Like the infant school, the nursery school was transported to Aotearoa New Zealand in the late 19th century. Nursery school activists reasoned that without their facilities, poor children would be subjected to neglect or sent to a workhouse ('A Cradle School.', 1872). As a consequence, the

purpose of the earliest education and care centres was to act as a welfare service, promoting a care and welfare doctrine which became inextricably linked to the nursery school and later education and care centres.

The nursery schools were modelled closely upon the Crèche model, which was also of growing interest in Aotearoa New Zealand ('The Creche.', 1869) with one editor writing "there can be no question of the desirability of *crèches* in this colony" ('Thursday, April 22, 1875.', 1875). Public opinion of the possible establishment of a Dunedin Crèche was high, with many members of society happy to have the establishment taking responsibility for what they considered to be 'uncared-for' youths who would play within the streets (May, 2013) as "the object of the institution is to save young children from the evils of being shut up in a room, or locked out in the streets during the working hours of mothers" ('Thursday, April 22, 1875.', 1875). The concerns of improving the situation for mothers and children positioned as 'unfortunate' were further reinforced by publications within the newspapers ('The Creche.', 1879, 'The Establishment Of A "crèche" In Dunedin.', 1879), further associating the image of crèches with a 'saving' welfare role. These institutions were set up to "train the children to habits of order, cleanliness and obedience" ('Thursday, April 22, 1875.', 1875), supported by opinion which purported that introducing children into the schooling system at the age of five was too late to train an effective citizen for society. One article in the *Otago Witness* contended "at five years the faculties of the child have unfolded to such an extent that the education for good or for evil has already set its seal on the 'embryo citizen'" ('Educational.', 1879). Therefore in addition to a welfare role, early childhood establishments were positioned as institutions in which children could be moulded into effective future citizens. A discursive image of the child in light of their future 'social capital' was becoming more prevalent within society, and early childhood education was seen as a method of investing into this 'social capital'.

These charitable nursery schools were seen as a welcome change from the 'baby-farms' which were prevalent in Aotearoa New Zealand at the time, which were viewed as unhygienic and unsafe. Minnie Dean, who operated a baby farm, was convicted of the murder of several infants under her care within such an establishment ('Baby-farming At Winton.', 1895, 'Charges Of Infanticide In Southland.', 1895, 'Mrs Dean Sentenced To Death.', 1895) and became the only woman ever to be sentenced to death within Aotearoa New Zealand (Prochner, 2009). The severity of the death sentence and abnormalisation of Minnie Dean within the media demonstrated society's intolerance of women who did not fit this image. The future potential of the child is lamented when the life of a child is lost, however this was intensified given Minnie Dean's gender and the construction of women as inherently nurturing.

*Societal positioning of the working mother and the impact upon early childhood education.*

In the context of the prosperous late 19th century Aotearoa New Zealand economy, early childhood establishments were increasingly viewed to be necessary to enable women to work in order to support burgeoning industries (May, 2013). As immigration numbers slowed (Prochner, 2009) young unmarried women were viewed as necessary within the workforce. Necessity repositioned women's involvement in the working industry as 'tolerated', but was limited acceptability was limited to employment in either housework or teaching, once the woman married the husband was expected to work, and she was to give up employment to tend to the home and children (Toynbee, 1995).

Dominant discursive images of the domesticated mother role promoted by Rousseau still prevailed. Early models of the education and care centres contested these dominant discursive images, by supporting working mothers by providing out of home care for young

children while the mother worked. These centres received no governmental funding. It was considered it disgraceful within society for a mother to leave the home and take work, as this was not her designated place and the government would not support an unpopular endeavour despite the growing economy. Working mothers were not perceived as deserving of aid, and the institutions that supported them by caring for their children while they worked were shunned also (May, 2013). Men were also denigrated, for if a woman undertook work outside the home, this indicated that the father could not adequately provide for the family or that the man abandoned his family (Toynbee, 1995). This was not always the situation as the economic depression of the 1880's resulted in many families requiring a supplementary income to survive. In these conditions, mothers who needed to work were unable to improve their families' situation sufficiently to choose to stop working. Sweat-shop workhouses in Aotearoa New Zealand exploited working mothers' necessity to work provided low rates of pay, which were uncontested due to the mother's desperation (Prochner, 2009), and the lack of governmental regulation due to the negative societal perception of the working mother. Additionally this does not consider the perspectives of mothers who chose to work.

Single and working mothers who did not have access to, or could not afford care for their children were forced to let them play on their own at home or in the streets, which was deemed inadequate and a nuisance by the upper classes. The welfare role of the early childhood service was again reinforced. As with the early infant schools, preliminary early childhood endeavours became the enterprise of the more affluent members of society who considered themselves responsible for taking on the cause for those they deemed less fortunate (May, 1993), and moulding these 'unfortunate' children into what they considered better future citizens.

*The advent of kindergarten.*

At these early stages of development, kindergarten was positioned as a charitable endeavour for underprivileged children (Duncan, 2008, p. 13; Prochner, 2009, p. 137 and 219). Hours of attendance were limited in comparison to a crèche, which allowed all day attendance. As the kindergarten model supported domestic mothers rather than working mothers, kindergarten quickly replaced crèche as the socially accepted form of early childhood education for the very young. While some kindergarten enrolled infants and toddlers (Cusins-Lewer & Gatley, 2008), most kindergartens did not. Working mothers, particularly those with infant children, still required the lengthened hours of a crèche, but as popular opinions were moving away from this mode of early childhood education (May, 1993), crèches were by and large left to charities to establish and run, and catered to those children considered unfortunates – orphans, abandoned children and children of working mothers (Pollock, 2012b) reinforcing the association of education and care centres with a welfare role, and attendance at these establishments as undesirable.

By the early 20th century, the competing philosophies of kindergarten and education and care centres (crèches, day nurseries) invigorated a 'care versus education' debate. This dichotomy within early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand was ignited by the kindergarten philosophy which in supporting mothers as first teachers, promoted their role as complimentary educators and contesting arguments by education and care centres arguing their out-of-home care for children supported working women to keep their children instead of placing them in foster care or orphanages (May, 2013). Both establishments agreed that their role was to improve parenting and that their expertise surpassed that of the parents. In many cases both crèches and kindergartens were initially overseen by a single association (May, 2013). Calls by these associations to establish crèches connected to kindergartens ('For The Children.', 1911) eventually became Free Kindergartens ('Kindergarten Association.',

1918). Once the public opinion swung to kindergartens as the preferred model, government financial endorsement followed (Duncan, 2008; Prochner, 2009). Kindergartens became affiliated with teacher education programmes ('Teachers' College.', 1909) and connections to the local schools ('Board Of Education.', 1879, 'Half-hour in the kindergarten.', 1879). Associations which originally catered for both models of early education disassociated themselves from the less popular crèches. Education opportunities for infants and toddlers became increasingly marginalised. As increasing numbers of middle class children attended, kindergarten management further distanced themselves from their earlier welfare focus (Prochner, 2009). Crèches, precursors to the later education and care centre, became the only form of early childhood education and care for working mothers; characterised by poor children, unfortunate mothers and welfare focus these establishments were abnormalised while kindergartens became a model for education for children from all families.

*Dr Truby King and the Plunket Society.*

Theories of appropriate childrearing practices promoted by Dr Frederick Truby King were equally influential in positioning education and care centres as a welfare establishment. Within Aotearoa New Zealand, Dr Frederick Truby King was highly influential in constructing the concept of an ideal mother as inherently maternal, focussed solely upon their child. With a history in mental health care, Dr King became interested in a scientific approach to infant care after his success with a scientific approach to feeding infant calves (M. T. King, 1943). Dr King founded the Plunket society of New Zealand in 1907, with one of the primary objectives of that society being "to emphasise the responsibilities of maternity and the duty of every mother to fit herself for the perfect fulfilment of motherhood" (Wilkins, 1918). Dr King's views, including that the role of mother belonged within the home environment as the primary carer for the child, were supported by influential members of society and

disseminated throughout the health community (Richardson, 2004). Dr King's ideas were given further credence through his promotion as the spokesperson for Aotearoa New Zealand in infant care, representing New Zealand at the first English-Speaking Infant Welfare Conference in 1913 ('Dr. Truby King In London', 1913). His philosophy permeated professional practice through his management of the training of Plunket Nurses at the Karitane baby hospital in Dunedin (Wilkins, 1918). The Plunket society's objective to liaise with all expectant mothers through the formation "in every town a Resident Plunket Nurse" (Wilkins, 1918, p. 3) further normalised his theories of childrearing. The core of their efforts was within their catchphrase "To help the mothers and save the babies" (M. T. King, 1943, cover page), as the significance of the future potential social capital of children was now commonly accepted (May, 2013), and the potential of a cheap workforce by the powerful factory owners was realised (Vandenbroeck, Coussée, & Bradt, 2010). Through Dr King's philosophical approach, mothers were urged to raise their children in order to become productive conforming members of society. Improvements in infant mortality rates brought about by the guidance of the Plunket nurse ensured more workers were available for the growing economy.

*The early experiences of Māori with European early childhood care.*

This historical account of education and care centres up until the early 20th century (excluding the early missionary infant schools) is Eurocentric. Māori infants and toddlers in Aotearoa New Zealand have a very different connection to the education and care centre. The establishment of the Plunket society is an appropriate point to introduce this relationship.

At the beginning of the 20th century, it was estimated that Māori infancy mortality rates was staggeringly disproportionate to those of New Zealand Europeans, with some reports identifying one in two Māori children would die before their fourth birthday (Bryder, 2001).

Whilst minimising infant mortality rates was the focus of the Plunket nurse, the role of care and education for Māori whānau was governed by the Department of Health. Despite the restrictions budget limitations wrought upon the extent of Department of Health's reach into Māori communities and consequently care for Māori children, Plunket nurses were restricted from caring for Māori children, as this was deemed outside their scope of work (Bryder, 2001). Moves by Plunket nurses to include Māori within their care were met with stringent opposition by New Zealand European families, who believed nurses who catered to Māori families "were contaminated by their association with Māori, and that all Māori were potential sources of infection" (Bryder, 2001). Compounding these difficulties was the euro-centric positioning of the Plunket philosophy. Implicit within the instructions designated by the *Mothercraft* (M. T. King, 1943) and *Feeding and care of baby* (T. King, 1937) manuals were ways of living idiosyncratic of the New Zealand European lifestyle, and did not reflect (or even consider) life on a Māori pā. Plunket nurses were even designated to only visit Māori mothers who were "living in European style" (Bryder, 2001), and barred from visiting the pā by their superiors. Byder argues that some Plunket nurses refused to limit their care to these situations, and extended their care to include the education of Māori mothers and their children. As identified earlier, the Plunket motto was "To help the mothers and save the babies", yet the Eurocentric positioning of the child-rearing practices outlined by the Plunket manuals served to marginalise and disenfranchise Māori mothers maternal practices. Plunket nurses positioned themselves as the purveyors of appropriate knowledge, and other ways of knowing essential to the Māori people were superseded. Arguably, resistance to this normalising practices were enacted by Māori mothers who only utilised Plunket services when their child was sick, and returned to their own practices when the child was well (Bryder, 2001). These Māori mothers sought to maintain their own forms of child-rearing for

their tamariki, but valued the opportunities to seek medical assistance to improve their child's health.


*The impact of World War II on early childhood education.*

The economic depression of the 1930s, like that of the 1880s, resulted in many families requiring a supplementary income to survive. Education and care centres established to enable mothers to shop were secretly utilised by working mothers (May, 1993). These establishments were advocated for by Christchurch city councillor and first woman Member of Parliament, Elizabeth McCombs, described as a "devoted champion of women's interests" ('Elizabeth Reid Mccombs', 1928). McCombs established the central city crèche in 1932 after years of calling for a central city crèche to be established ('Women's Corner.', 1920). Crèches of this era established the opinion that early childhood education and care is a community service instead of a welfare service (May, 1993). During World War II, this opinion and positioning of early childhood education and care was supported by government as women's labour was considered essential to the war effort. Extra funding was supplied for education and care centres to be established to "cater for children whose mothers were engaged in work of national importance" (Department of Education, 1946, p. 3).

The need for early childhood education and care was considered necessary only during the course of the war. In post-World War II society in Aotearoa New Zealand, early childhood models were again scrutinised. New theories based in psychology and sociology, highlighting the importance of the 'nuclear' family designated appropriate and inappropriate forms of early childhood education and care. Settings that supported these theoretical views were considered desirable, whilst others that did not support the dominant discourse were positioned as the source of societal problems (May, 2002). In order to investigate the role the government should play in early childhood education, and which form of educational

provision it should support, a commission of inquiry was set in place by the government. *The Report of the Consultative Committee on Preschool Educational Services* (Bailey et al., 1947), colloquially known as 'The Bailey report' deemed certain forms of early childhood education - Kindergarten and Playgroup – as appropriate. These establishments were described as places where a child could "enjoy types of play that can rarely be provided in the ordinary New Zealand home (because of) the almost universal necessity for the New Zealand mother to manage her house and family single-handed, her time being quite inadequate for planning play for her children" (Bailey et al., 1947, p. 6). The role of play in the child's growth and education was increasingly deemed as important and early childhood education and care settings were now being viewed as a means of improving the child's access to a range of play activities, as a support for mothers. Conversely, education and care centres in the form of full day nursery schools, were considered to displace the maternal responsibility, and were overtly negatively situated within this report:

> *For a number of reasons we cannot at the present time recommend the establishment of all-day nursery schools...the whole day long programme is too long, and that young children spending the whole of every day from Monday to Friday in a nursery school are deprived of the vital experiences that only the normal home can provide. (Bailey et al., 1947, p. 11)*

The reporting committee designate that nursery schools could be provided in major cities, but only for women in exceptional circumstances, who as a last resort must utilise them. While early childhood education and care was repositioned as a community concern, delineation is made between early childhood education and care which supports home based mothers set against that which supports working mothers. Societal positioning of the mother in the home rendered arguments for education and care services redundant (May, 2002). early childhood

education and care which enabled mothers to work was not considered of community concern, and was still positioned as the responsibility of the welfare agencies.

The negative positioning of education and care centres within the Bailey Report could be linked to the roles and philosophies held by the members of the commission. According to May (2001) "the message that mothers were selfish and neglecting their children by going out to work was promoted by Plunket, Parents' Centre, playcentre and kindergarten" (p.46). Of the nine members of the commission, three members are from early childhood education and care services deemed 'appropriate' by the commission (kindergarten and playcentre), one from Plunket, and one from the Department of Health, who (as stipulated earlier) also subscribed to the views of Dr King. The underrepresentation by childcare centres of the time may be due to the decentralised nature of the education and care centre at this time, as there was no national body of representation. This situation was set to change within the 1960s.

*The impacts of the feminist movement upon early childhood education.*

In the 1960s, the emergent feminist movement became increasingly influential in issues surrounding the empowerment of women, and the right to a woman's personal determination of self. This served to challenge prevalent discourses and discursive practices limiting women to domestic roles (Grimshaw, 1987). The right for women to follow their own interests relied upon the capacity of the education and care centre to support this pursuit (Renwick, 1978). The right to governmentally subsidised childcare became a feminist issue (May, 2000b). Activists argued that the links between early childhood education and notions of welfare had been normalised. The crèches and nursery schools had been perceived as suitable only as a replacement for inadequate mothers, which included the working mother. Although feminist groups did not emerge in Aotearoa New Zealand until 1970 (May, 1992), these early shifts in ideologies initiated by the feminist movement began to question the normalisation of the

mother as the primary caregiver for the child, and argued for early childhood education as both a support and enhancement for the home beyond the sessional programmes of kindergarten. However these viewpoints were not immediately understood nor supported. Sonja Davies discusses correcting Walter Nash (the 27th Prime Minister of New Zealand, leader of the second labour government) by stating "I pointed out that child care was meant to supplement home life, not replace it" (S. Davies, 1993, p. 145). An increase in the number of female Members of Parliament ensured that these feminist concerns were expressed within the house debates (Grey, 2002), increasing the amount of exposure and legitimacy for women's rights. In addition to the feminist movement, public furore surrounding poor conditions within crèches and nursery schools led to change within the early childhood domain, with direct governmental intervention in the form of regulatory guidelines for education and care centres, introduced in 1960.

Through the 1960s and 1970s increased demand for childcare emerged. The nationalisation of education and care centre, driven by Sonja Davies, resulted in the foundation of the New Zealand Association of Child Care Centres Incorporated. Founded in 1963, this was the first national representative body for education and care centres in Aotearoa New Zealand. By 1966, married women accounted for 41% of the female labour force (New Zealand Department of Statistics, 1967). By 1969 the government initiated tax allowances for families who paid for childcare services (M. Moss, 1998). Consequently, childcare participation increased 164% between 1963 and 1972 (Pollock, 2012a ). This was the start of a change in the government's attitude towards the education and care centre (Pollock, 2012a).

In 1971 the *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Pre-School Education* (Hill et al., 1971), colloquially known as the 'Hill report', addressed the inability for kindergartens or play centres to fit the needs of the working mother. Interestingly, they also addressed that

working mothers need not be 'unfortunates' but may include "a mother with particular training or skill [who] wishes to use it in the community" (Hill et al., 1971, p. 29). When compared to the recommendations of the 1947 'Bailey Report', it is apparent that the right for a mother to work and the place that education and care centres plays in their ability to do so, was being re-considered within society. William Sutch (former Minister of Finance and at that time the permanent secretary of the Department of Industry and Commerce) speaking at the annual conference for the New Zealand Childcare Association in 1970, outlined the viewpoints of the current generation of women, stating "a woman should have the opportunity to work and that this opportunity should not be diminished by the inadequacies of an educational system which does not provide for the care and training of pre-school children" (Sutch, quoted in D. Barney, 1975, p. 132) Normalised causal relationships between the working mother and the disadvantaged child were being questioned (D. Barney, 1975).

The 'Hill report' also recommended that kindergartens and playcentres collaborate with crèches to develop opportunities for increased access to early childhood services for working mothers (Hill et al., 1971). Following this the article "*It's time for a change"* in *Pre-school education,* the journal of the Free Kindergarten association (McGowan, 1974) refers to the new development of the 'working mother' and predicts "one is able to detect that while the present system of pre-school education is filling a need, it is also recognised that there is the necessity to make a change for the needs of the future" (McGowan, 1974, p. 3). An awareness was developing that the current early childhood education and care models were insufficient, and new models which supported working mothers would play a major role in the future shaping of early childhood education and care in Aotearoa New Zealand (Dinniss, 1974, p. 12).

Yet a dichotomy between education and care was still prevalent between education and care centres and kindergartens/playcentres. Statistical reports produced by the Department of

Education reported on data relevant to education and care centres, yet clearly compartmentalised their role by labelling them as "Centres primarily used as a temporary substitute for parental care" whereas Kindergartens and playcentres were categorised as "Centres primarily concerned with preschool education" (D. Barney, 1975). Although the reports state that it is not their intent to imply that education and care centres have no educational value this form of classification belies their intent.

Within the 1970's questions were being raised regarding the status, management and value of early childhood education. By 1975, Renwick argues that the issue of women's self-determination was at the forefront of the issue of the availability of early childhood (Renwick, 1978). Questions regarding women's autonomy also being raised in the early childhood profession, a profession dominated by female workers, yet directed primarily by male managers and researchers. At this time, there was an inherent tension between early childhood as a "women's industry [with] the definitions and control of this industry by men" (W. D. Barney, 1978, p. 22). Renwick asserts that educational benefits of involvement in early education were no longer in question, yet educators in training or intending to work in these establishments viewed their future vocation as the lowest form of educational provision (W. D. Barney, Barney, Dutton, & Diack, 1972; O'Rourke, 1978, p. 120). Cooper & Royal-Tangaere (1994) contend this low status is linked to the low-status positioning of the very young child in the perceptions of Pākehā families, a positioning which is reflected in the low levels of funding provided for early childhood services. Governmental policies still placed childrearing as an individual family's responsibility as opposed to a collective or national responsibility. In re-positioning early childhood education and care as an individual responsibility, a connection with neoliberal perspectives is raised. Neoliberalism will be discussed in further depth later in this chapter.

*Rangatiratanga and early childhood education.*

Concurrent with these changes to early childhood education, awareness for improving educational outcomes for Māori children became a governmental focus. Increased attention was drawn to educational success for Māori following publication of the *Report on Department of Māori Affairs* (Hunn, 1961) colloquially known as the "Hunn Report". Discourses which positioned Māori families as 'deficient', and home life as 'inadequate' in preparing their children for mainstream schooling resulted in a perception of Māori children as 'disadvantaged' within the educational system, and consequently in life. These perceptions were queried at the time, one author denotes the report as an "[o]ver simplification of the complexities of race relations by the one person in New Zealand who has most power to implement his views [which] is disturbing" (Biggs, 1961, p. 361).While it has been indicated that few Māori children participated in early childhood education and care prior to 1960 (Ritchie & Skerett, 2013), other studies infer an invisibility of Māori participation in "Pākehā initiated and controlled services" (Pihama, 1993, p. 79).

Māori families increased attendance to Māori-led Playcentres, as an attempted to reclaim self-determination for their children's educational future (Pihama, 1993). However, these initiatives still followed the constructs of the contemporary forms of early childhood education and care practices, adopting a Eurocentric approach to pedagogical practice, and normalising these practices for Māori children. By 1973, early childhood establishments that featured Māori leadership and promoted Māori tikanga were proven to be the most successful for Māori rangatiratanga in education (J. R. Ritchie & Skerett, 2013).

Social equality movements in the 1980's re-evaluated the history of early childhood education and care by questioning the Eurocentric nature of the care versus education dichotomy. Māori pedagogical philosophies drew attention to the origins of this dichotomy in the British class society (where the lower classes attended education and care centres, and the

more affluent were involved in kindergarten) and questioned the validity of this dichotomy for the indigenous population (Cooper & Royal-Tangaere, 1994). Other normalised Eurocentric practices, such as gender inequality reinforced suppression of Māori ways of being (Cooper & Royal-Tangaere, 1994). Pihama and Mara argued that even the English language serve to "render women invisible" (p. 216), as male pronouns have been historically dominant in Aotearoa New Zealand. This contests the positioning of male and female within the structure of the Māori language, in which the combined pronoun 'ia' does not separate male from female.

A legacy of positioning Māori children as underachieving (Marshall, 1991) and the drive to preserve te reo Māori and tikanga Māori (Hohepa, 1998; Maxwell, 1989),  led to the establishment of Te Kōhanga Reo as a Māori-led early childhood initiative organised by parents. Te Kōhanga Reo also became an alternative and response to the Eurocentric positioning and philosophical underpinning of New Zealand-European led kindergartens, playcentres and crèches (Bushouse, 2008). The care versus education dichotomy became obsolete in this context as Te Kōhanga Reo took a holistic approach to children's learning, recognising the importance of both care and education in developing the child and the family as a whole, and embracing the Māori philosophical approach to child rearing (Pihama, 1993).

*Questioning historic discursive positions: Unification in unionisation.*

By the 1980's the majority of society still refused to confront the actuality that many women either needed or chose to work. Up until the 1980's, education and care centres were still positioned as the 'underside' of early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand. However, the ideal image of the maternal domestic woman was increasingly challenged through a re-evaluation of the portrayal of the roles women have historically held within the workforce (K. Clark, Cook, & Pearson, 1983). Contemporary value ascribed to 'women's'

professions, including the prestige accorded to early childhood education and care, were also being re-examined. Teachers within education and care centres in this era are amongst the lowest paid workers in Aotearoa New Zealand. Educators within early childhood education and care came from a range of different backgrounds and had varying levels of training. No formal links existed between education and care centres, leading to a disparate early childhood community. The establishment of the Early Childhood Workers Union in 1982 (K. Clark et al., 1983), working in alliance with Kindergarten Teachers Association sought to unify early childhood teachers. However, this unification was frustrated by the historical delineation of the kindergarten as an educational setting, and crèches as a welfare concern reinforced by governmental demarcation of the differing early childhood services. Education and care centres were administered by the Department of Social Welfare, whereas kindergartens were governed by the Department of Education. Problems faced by teachers in each setting differed, aggravating the development of a shared focus and direction, impacting upon the interrelations between the teachers of early childhood establishments, and their potential for concerted unification.

*The advent of neoliberal governance and the repositioning of early childhood education in the late 20th century.*

The social and political conditions of the 1980s underpinned major governmental changes to early childhood education and care in Aotearoa New Zealand. During this era, areas previously considered to solely concern women (such as childcare and paid parental leave) were openly debated within parliament with a view to promote change, a situation attributed to the increase in the number of female Members of Parliament and their devotion to representing the issues for women in the public (Grey, 2002). The economic downturn created a need to redress funding from welfare and education. Feminist arguments for the

promotion of 'choice', seeking to promote women's rights regarding work and early childhood education, were aligned with a government seeking to radically change the education system (Stover, 2013). Economic hardship promoted emerging neoliberal discourses, which reinforced the family's individual economic responsibility for their children (May, 2000a).

In contrast to the historical view of early childhood education and care as a community endeavour for social good, neoliberal discursive positioning of early childhood education and care promoted individualised benefits from early education, placing responsibility of this education upon families. The treasury department argued that education "shared the main characteristics of other commodities traded in the marketplace and therefore could not be seen as a public good" (S. Farquhar, 2008a, p. 50) Within the Foucauldian frame, neoliberalism is understood as an artificial rearranging of the competitive conduct of subjects within the state, and the development of "a new relation between expertise and politics especially in the realm of welfare where…new forms of prudentialism management manifest and constitute themselves discursively in the language of 'purchaser-provider', audit, performance, and 'risk management" (Besley & Peters, 2007). Neoliberal governance of early childhood education and care promotes families to participate within a privatised rather than state-run system. Neoliberal governance involves the promotion of free-market competition, but maintains control of the products through quality assurance regulations and systems. In this way, neoliberalism is conceived as a means of which competition is not 'free' as the term 'free market' would suggest, but a "structure with formal properties" (Foucault, 2008a). Neoliberalism through a Foucauldian lens will be further unpacked within Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework.

In 1988, following the recommendations from *Education to be more: report of the Early Childhood Care and Education Working Group* (New Zealand Early Childhood Care

and Education Working Group, 1988), *Before five: early childhood care and education in New Zealand* (New Zealand Department of Education, 1988a) was published, establishing a funding system for education and care centres. The government devolved responsibility from fully administering early childhood education and care, but maintained a measure of control through quality assurance instruments. A regulatory framework was instigated for early childhood education. Funding was provided for centres in return for their assent to quality assurance mechanisms set out through this framework. Over the course of the next few years, these legislative changes decreased child-adult ratios, wages for teachers and mandated minimum teacher qualifications (Austin, 1993). But it is argued that governmental unification of the early childhood education sector has homogenised the sector, and "discursively drawn [educators] into a national manifestation of the will to measure education" (Gibbons, 2013, p. 504). Funding of early childhood education and care was awarded in return for the centres assent to neoliberal forms of measurement which remove "the locus of power away from the knowledge of practising professionals to auditors, policymakers and statisticians, none of whom need to know anything about the  profession in question" (B. Davies, Browne, Gannon, Honan, & Somerville, 2005, p. 344). The image of the child as a being of potential future social capital shifted to account for the child's future economic contribution to society. Within this neoliberal discourse, investment into childhood experience became perceived as 'quantifiable' in relation to potential future economic benefits.

Despite the movement towards positioning early education as an individual responsibility, discursive positioning of the education and care centre as a welfare concern (New Zealand Early Childhood Care and Education Working Group, 1988) endured through continued interactions with the Department of Welfare. In July 1986, the provision of education and care centres was transferred from the Department of Social Welfare to the NZMoE (M. Moss, 1998; New Zealand Department of Education, 1988b). Yet continued

affiliation of education and care centres with the Department of Social Welfare through parental benefits/subsidies sustained the care and education dichotomy between the early childhood organisations and kindergartens. Despite this, by 1989 the term 'early childhood education *and care*' was being more commonly used in professional settings to depict the role of the entire early childhood community (Podmore, 1989) signalling the beginnings of an alignment in the early childhood field. This alignment was strengthened in 1990 when the Early Childhood Workers union, and the Kindergarten Teachers' Association merged, forming one union for all early childhood teachers and aligning the aims for teachers as one cohesive body. Unification was furthered by the inclusion of this group into the primary teachers union, the New Zealand Education Institute (NZEI – Te Riu Roa), which held major influence in raising issues of pay parity in the late 1990's. This unification contributed to a perception of the role of the early childhood teacher as a 'profession' rather than a 'vocation', and increased the perception of the field of early childhood as a 'professional' domain (Dalli, 2010a).

While bringing the education and care centre under the umbrella of the NZMoE has resulted in positive change, it has also resulted in their funding and direction being at the whims of the government in power. This has resulted in several changes according to the philosophical underpinnings of the party sitting in parliament, and their drive to meet the wishes of their constituent voters. In 1991, continuing the Labour Party's neoliberal approach towards governance, the fourth National government reduced staffing ratios and qualification requirements for teachers, halved funding for children under the age of two, and increased the connections between education and care centres and welfare services through social welfare subsidies for low income families (Dalli, 1993; L. Mitchell, 1993). Reductions in the funding of early childhood centres economically disadvantaged women who chose to work (and were

consequently less likely to receive subsidies) than mothers who worked in order to support their families (A. Smith, 1996).

During the term of this National government, despite being the term of the first female Prime Minister of Aotearoa New Zealand, discussions on education and care centres within New Zealand society were severely limited, and only initiated by female members of parliament (Grey, 2002, p. 22). This is particularly noteworthy as all the Ministers of Education for this timeframe were male (Lockwood Smith, 1990-1996; Wyatt Creech, 1996-1999; Nick Smith, 1999).

Participation by Māori children in early childhood education was still being positioned as 'necessary' in order to ensure their overall success and a means in which to mould future citizens. Within the publication *Barriers to Māori participation in early childhood education and strategies to overcome them* (E. Clark, 1995) it is argued "a sound foundation for children in early childhood is the guarantee of the preservation of society and the greatest legacy a nation state can bequeath its neophyte citizens (p. 7).

The notion of 'quality' in early childhood education also became a focal point for governmental policy in the 1990s (S.-E. Farquhar, 1991; New Zealand & Education Review Office, 1996). Investigation into the quality of early childhood education and care centres was conducted as the National government initiated the Parents as First Teachers scheme supporting parents as 'teachers' in the home. Contesting views on the 'expert' primary educator for children were made apparent through these actions and a scheme which positions parents as the first 'teachers' of their children. The government expressed concern regarding the quality of the education and care centre, whilst promoting the domestic role of the parent with the promotion of home based care, promoting historic maternal discourse. Smith (2000) challenged these initiatives, by asserting that quality was not indicated by the type of service, but the quality of the care involved within the service. Meade (2000) also contended that

despite the research into the importance of quality in early childhood education, the changes led by the National government resulted in a reduction of overall quality from that initiated with the *Before five* (New Zealand Department of Education, 1988a) reforms. The National government's promotion of home-based parent-led early childhood education and care, and actions to reduce the quality of education and care centres appear to impair the effective governance of centre-based early childhood education and care.

Despite actions which appear to undermine the value of early childhood education and care outside of the home, *Te Whāriki: he whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early childhood curriculum* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996; hereafter to be known as *Te Whāriki*) was provisioned for, and eventually published in 1996 during the term of the fourth National government. *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) embraced a partnership between New Zealand European and Māori philosophical perspectives of early education (Mutch, 2001), further facilitating an alignment of 'care' and 'education' for early education providers. The introduction of a national curriculum also facilitated common ground between early childhood education providers. However, while *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) was considered the national curriculum for early childhood education in New Zealand, utilisation of this curriculum was not mandatory for early childhood services under the *Education (Early Childhood Centres) Regulations 1998* (New Zealand Government, 1998).

During the term of the fifth Labour government, *Pathways to the future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki: A 10-year strategic plan for early childhood education* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2002) was instigated. At the end of the ten year plan, it was envisioned that all education and care centre teachers would be fully qualified and registered. Incentive grants were put in place to ensure teachers attained their qualifications with scholarships granted to teachers entering early childhood initial teacher education programmes (New Zealand

Ministry of Education, 2004). Pay parity between primary and early childhood teachers was also attained; education and care 'workers' became 'teachers' The professional status reserved for Kindergarten teachers was broadened to include all teachers in the field of early childhood (Dalli, 2010a). Increases to funding to improve access for families, specifically Māori and Pasifika children, who were described as "disadvantaged" (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 9) as they were "missing out" (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 6). Increased participation for all children was targeted by a 20 Hours Free ECE programme which subsidised early childhood centres to allow 3 and 4 year olds to participate in early childhood centres for 20 hours a week free of charge.

At the end of 2008 the fifth National government was elected into office. Utilising the argument that Aotearoa New Zealand was under the influence of a world-wide recession, cuts to public spending greatly affected early childhood educational services. Many of the aims of the strategic plan were abandoned to suit the philosophical views of the National party (One & Dalli, 2009). The minimum number of qualified teachers working within an early childhood education and care setting was lowered from 100% qualified teachers to 80%. Extra funding would not be given to centres that employed more than 80% trained teachers, redirecting the costs of employing a fully qualified teaching team to the managers of education and care centres. These costs were passed on to parents, or centres choose to reduce the numbers of qualified teachers in their teams. Scholarships for early childhood initial teacher education programmes were cut, as was funding for a mentoring programme enabling teachers to upgrade to full teacher registration. Maximum group sizes of children in a centre increased from 50 to 150 (New Zealand Government, 2008). Additionally, terminology used by this government has reignited the care versus education dichotomy, through their use of vernacular in their policies, dropping the 'care' aspect from 'early childhood education and care' (ChildForum, 2011).

Also initiated in 2008 was the education strategy *Ka Hikitia: Accelerating success* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2013a). This initiative into success for Māori learners across the sectors of education positions success for Māori learners according to Māori educational goals. This educational strategy seeks to realign Eurocentric educational values to Māori values and reposition the locus of control for Māori early childhood learners back within the Māori community, actualising the rights of tamariki and their whānau to pursue educational aims concordant with the perspectives of their culture (Mills, 2013).

### *Current concerns.*

As of 2012, of the total population 60% of 2 year olds and 40% of all 1 year olds are participating in early childhood education, with between 65-68% attending an education and care setting (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2013b). By 2013 the number of 2 year olds attending had risen to 64% of the entire population (EducationCounts, 2013). Early childhood education and care has become a growing industry in contemporary society in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Neoliberal discursive positioning of early childhood education and care as an individual responsibility persists but only for children under the age of three years. Governmental provision of the 20FreeECE scheme and other governmental strategies promote near mandatory levels of involvement in early childhood education and care for children aged three and up (National Party of New Zealand, 2014b). Responsibility for the care and education of infants and toddlers is positioned as a parental obligation, as younger children are excluded from participation within the 20FreeECE scheme. The historical maternal discourse is invoked through these strategies as disparities in provision for infants and toddlers position their involvement in early childhood education and care as less important than children aged three to five, valuing the home over the education and care setting.

Historical discourses surrounding 'childcare' from the early twentieth century still influence contemporary research. The value of early education for infants and toddler is questioned as negative effects of childcare and the effects of maternal separation upon infants and toddlers are still being heavily investigated (Brooks-Gunn, Han, & Waldfogel, 2010; Coley & Lombardi, 2013; H. J. Lee, 2008; Ohta et al., 2014). Likewise, discursive positioning of the 'working mother' is still queried in society and within the field of research (Ades, 2009; Aloa, 2008). A legacy of negative discourses surrounding the effects of early childhood education and care creates tension with feminist perspectives on the role of early childhood provision in creating equal opportunities for women to pursue career choices.

Tensions between feminist perspectives and the economic positioning of early childhood education also prevail. In Stover's (2013) investigation into the perspectives of prominent historical figures within the early childhood movement, the incongruity between the goals of the feminist movement and economic arguments and the assertion that "feminist goals were co-opted by economic forces" (p. 5) is suggested.

Neoliberal governance of early childhood education and care also regulates provision according to market viability; only centres which can remain financially viable can operate. However these centres are not those which provide the best educational outcomes for children.

Within Aotearoa New Zealand a privatised early childhood system has led to a market dominated by corporate providers. The marketisation of early childhood provision is detrimental to families and society at large (Carr & Mitchell, 2009; Meade, 1993; P. Moss, 2009; White & Friendly, 2012). As governmental policy requires only 50% total qualified staff within an early childhood setting, despite recent findings of the positive correlation between higher rates of qualified staff conducted in Aotearoa New Zealand (Meade,

Robinson, Smorti, Stuart, & Williamson, 2012) corporate providers are only required to meet these minimum standards, maximising their profit from children's education.

Certain groups of children which had been historically positioned as 'disadvantaged' are now positioned as 'priority learners' (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2015b). Gifted learners fall within this category identified as children with special abilities within the 'children with diverse learning needs' group (ibid). Swadener (2012) argues that relabeling these groups of individuals is an act of hegemony, negating opportunities for "authentic dialogue" (p.8). Questions need to be asked what this means, not only for the learners grouped within this bracket within early childhood education and care, but the teachers who are expected to work with these groups of 'priority learners'. Concepts of giftedness need to be considered within the context of Aotearoa New Zealand.

**Conceptions of giftedness informing educational practice and policy for gifted children in Aotearoa New Zealand.**

*Historical conceptions of giftedness: the search for a 'g' factor.*

Internationally, gifted education came to the fore with research conducted by Louis Terman (1877-1956). Terman's (Terman, 1925) positivist research (axiomatic, searching for a singular explanation) into the concept of giftedness sought out a singular universal theory of giftedness. This conceptualisation of giftedness has been instrumental in establishing a legacy of research practices and concepts of giftedness (Robinson, 2006). Terman's (Terman, 1925) research initiated standardised testing methods for the assessment of giftedness in children, a method that persists today (Abroms, 1982; Ambrose, 2013; Colombo et al., 2009; Dai, 2013; D. J. Matthews, 2012) and normalises giftedness as synonymous with intellectual intelligence. When constructed through positivist research, the gifted child is an intellectual

being with a particular set of traits and characteristics which hold across all cultures and societies.

Within Aotearoa New Zealand, the investigation into children with high ability was brought to the fore in a study by George Parkyn entitled *Children of high intelligence: A New Zealand study* (Parkyn, 1948). This investigation was influenced by Terman's study (Terman, 1925), pursuant of a general definition of giftedness which can be explained through the demonstration of particular abilities. Parkyn avoids the term gifted within his study, instead searching for high intelligence, displacing the use of the term gifted and associating high ability with intelligence. Parkyn's (Parkyn, 1948) definition of 'high intelligence' is specifically "those who show exceptional ability to solve the problems in a standardised scale of intelligence tests" (p. 2). Parkyn (Parkyn, 1948) queries the validity of intelligence tests to identify intellectual abilities due to the dependence of the test upon verbal communication to describe problems, but this contention is only levelled at the tests to call for a better form of testing which would identify a "common component" (p. 3) or a "general factor *g*" (p. 3) for gifted ability. The dependence upon standardised testing, and the quest for a single defining characteristic reflects Terman's (Terman, 1925) quest for a universalised image of 'the gifted child'.

Although gifted education in Aotearoa New Zealand gained more prominence through Parkyn's (Parkyn, 1948) study, perceptions of giftedness have been documented in Aotearoa New Zealand as early as the beginning of the twentieth century. Tensions between extending children's abilities and 'hot-housing' children is illustrated in an opinion piece published within papers in Aotearoa New Zealand in 1908 ('Over- Taught Children.', 1908). This piece purports that the societal interest in prodigal children have resulted in the need for mothers to produce their own 'prodigal child', which the writer argues is at the expense of the child's overall happiness. The piece goes on to argue that parents must "swallow their chargrin"

when their brilliant child does not turn out to be an eminent adult. This piece positions gifted children as exceptional only as a result of intense parental instruction, or of 'hothouse' instruction, which produces emotionally disturbed children and adults. This position is later argued to be an extreme view, diametrically opposed to the other "extremists [who] are concerned with the production of "brighter" children with the development of "superior" minds (Ashby, 1970, p.5). These historical discursive positions contest the notion of giftedness, promoting other explanations for the child's exceptionality, either denigrating the production of such exceptionality or revelling in unsuccessful attempts to 'manufacture' precocity. These historical discursive images of the gifted child were colloquial and unsupported by research evidence yet their images prevail today, arguably confusing more important problems within gifted education for contemporary children.

### *Shifting paradigms of research into giftedness: problematizing a singular definition and seeking multiplicity.*

Persson (2012) claims influential socio-political movements affected the construction of giftedness. Within the era of research conducted by Terman (Terman, 1925)and Parkyn (Parkyn, 1948), a modernist approach to research dominated scientific research. This approach is characterised by an adherence to logic, and observation based approaches, which dominated scientific research. This approach became known as the positivist approach to science. This will be discussed in more depth within Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework.

Persson (2012) identifies the social constructivist movement as the main catalyst in a movement away from the behaviourist/cognitive (including developmental) definitions, which still heavily influence North American conceptions of giftedness (Yuen & Fong, 2012). These alternate conceptions of giftedness, placed greater importance on the cultural

influences affecting the development of giftedness, originating in European societies, but adopted by other societies influenced by European philosophy (Persson, 2012).

Heller (2012) contends that the current knowledge of giftedness is based upon differing research paradigms. Indeed, a whole issue of *Gifted and Talented International* (2012) was devoted to cultural variation, universality and research validity. Alternate approaches applied within the field gifted research of have questioned the validity of historical studies. and have led to a call for unity through paradigmatic shift and reconceptualisation of the approach to giftedness (Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius, & Worrell, 2012; Ziegler & Phillipson, 2012; Ziegler, Stoeger, & Vialle, 2012). However, the call for unity through a paradigm shift implies a unified and universal approach to giftedness research which is not supported by the postmodernist paradigms being suggested, which value multiplicity and the perspectives of the individual (this will also be discussed in more depth within Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework).

These problems of unification are echoed in Aotearoa New Zealand, with the call for a cohesive concept of giftedness to ensure appropriate educational provision (Tapper, 2012). However, there are problems in aiming for cohesion and uniformity when negotiating a phenomenon such as giftedness which is informed by cultural and societal perceptions. While there is merit in proposing increased understanding and awareness of the phenomenon of giftedness in order to improve educational practice for children, uniformity in conception can have a limiting effect. These concerns must also be considered when promoting governmental action, as the prospect of a hegemonic approach could exclude alternate definitions.

Some researchers have also questioned the appropriateness of a unified approach to giftedness within an educational system which is influenced by a globalised economic practices (Ambrose, 2012). The influence of the neoliberal discourse has been levelled at the definitions of 'appropriate' learning for children within *Te Whāriki* (Duhn, 2006). These

definitions of optimum learning goals for children influence the expression of giftedness through pedagogy that values particular ways of knowing and being. Aspirations of curriculum and the subsequent promotion of particular dispositions reflects the aspirations of the economic approach of the government; encouraging the development of gifted individuals for "frenetic materialistic acquisition and self-aggrandisement" (Ambrose, 2012, p. 101). When definitions and practices in gifted education based upon research grounded within neoliberal societies are transported to societies which employ alternate forms of governance, the value placed upon these aspirations for children's learning may result in cultural and paradigmatic domination.

In Aotearoa New Zealand giftedness "was originally seen as an innate quality, relatively fixed" (Braggett & Moltzen, 2000, p. 781). But international influences to the Aotearoa New Zealand conceptualisation of giftedness have given rise to developmental (dynamic, malleable, constantly shifting), domain specific (many aptitudes of giftedness, a child may show excellence within one, but not necessarily across all), and socio-cultural (culturally mediated and defined giftedness) conceptions of giftedness. The image of the gifted child is not universally defined, it is instead culturally negotiated. Tapper (2012) argues that educational policy for gifted children within Aotearoa New Zealand reflects the concerns of postmodernist philosophy.

But there are concerns that cultural variation may construct a definition of giftedness which is too broad in its scope, or may dispense with the notion of giftedness altogether as behaviours and abilities are individualised, culturally negotiated and located within specific contexts. Within Aotearoa New Zealand the perception that cultural variation may attenuate gifted expression to include all children may further "lend support to the 'every child is gifted' discourse, which is still held by many educators in New Zealand" (Tapper, 2012, p. 8). It is argued these broad perspectives on giftedness are utilised in an effort to reduce the

tendency of parents to compare their children's abilities and force children into unnecessary competition (Wong, 2013). These concerns allude to the historical discursive situation of giftedness as intense parental instruction, consequently the utilisation of the 'every child is gifted' discourse must be problematised to consider individual experiences.

### *Contemporary conceptions and practices.*

In 2001 a working party was commissioned by the fifth Labour government to report on the state of gifted education within Aotearoa New Zealand (Working Party on Gifted Education, 2001). The Working Party on Gifted Education concluded that equitable provision of education was hindered by societal perception that gifted learners would succeed regardless of intervention as gifted individuals are considered 'privileged' within Aotearoa New Zealand and "it was perceived that to offer them anything in the way of dedicated or 'special' provisions was simply adding advantage to advantage" (Working Party on Gifted Education, 2001).

The Working Party on Gifted Education considered the needs for early childhood educational strategy within this report, recommending that identification of gifted children occur as young as possible. Early childhood teachers were considered vital within this process. However, while the vision and core principles for gifted education endorse early childhood settings as essential, the key recommendations to instigate change for gifted learners within early childhood settings were not implemented, and no explanation for why this has not occurred has been made public. The lack of strategies for early childhood centres further marginalises the importance of early childhood gifted education by the government.

Within current practice, primary and secondary school sectors are afforded clear definitions and provision for strategies for gifted education, whereas policies and strategies

for giftedness in early childhood are minimal. There is no document developed by the

NZMoE specifically for early childhood teachers to refer to. Early childhood teachers who

wish to further understand the NZMoE's perceptions on the education of gifted children are

limited to a single publication which encompasses early childhood through to secondary

school (New Zealand Ministry of Education et al., 2008). Conversely, there are high levels of

governmental support for gifted education goals for primary and secondary school children.

Teachers are supported with grants for furthering their education in gifted education (New

Zealand Ministry of Education, 2014g) a specialised web resource (New Zealand Ministry of

Education, 2014f) and extensive information on curriculum delivery for gifted learners in the

NZMoE publication *Gifted and talented students: meeting their needs in New Zealand*

*schools* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2012a). There is disparity in the equity of

provision for giftedness between the early childhood and state schooling sectors through

governmental legislation and practices. This could be attributed to the dramatic cut in funding

for gifted education by the government. The 2009 National budget cut funding to gifted

education initiatives in half from $2.82mil, then reduced this even further in the 2010 budget

to $1.27mil (McGillray, 2010). The 2013 budget outlined funding initiatives for gifted

education, but only for the school sector (New Zealand Treasury, 2013). This disparity is the

responsibility of the government to remedy (Quennerstedt, 2009).

 For parents who want to know more about giftedness in early childhood, the NZMoE

recommends consulting the teachers within their early childhood service for advice (New

Zealand Ministry of Education, 2012b). However, according to research into teachers'

understandings of giftedness, many early childhood teachers within Aotearoa New Zealand

are unable or uncomfortable articulating the definitions of giftedness, some refuting

giftedness exists (Keen, 2005). Wong and Hansen (2012) assert that most early childhood

teachers would agree with the intentions of gifted education, but insist that the lack of

leadership by the NZMoE towards a common conception of giftedness results in a pedagogical paralysis. Wong and Hansen (2012) argue that the "Ministry of Education still does not have any clearly discernible gifted education policies which apply to children in early childhood settings" (p. 9).

*Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) does not specifically address giftedness within young children. Within the early childhood curriculum of Aotearoa New Zealand, giftedness is positioned as a 'special need'. Some research into giftedness positions gifted learners as having 'special needs' very different to other children (Lassig, 2009). The NZMoE positions educational practice for gifted individuals' education as "meeting their needs" (as in the publication *Gifted and talented students: meeting their needs in New Zealand schools* [New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2012a]).

When conceptualised as a special need, giftedness falls under the domain of Special Education. Yet discursive language surrounding early childhood special needs within Aotearoa New Zealand construct the image of a child with a special need as a child with a 'disability' (Alliston & Research New Zealand, 2007; New Zealand Education Review Office, 2012; New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2014c; TeachNZ, 2014). This discursive image is not limited to the Aotearoa New Zealand context (Walsh et al., 2010; Wellisch, 2006). Interestingly, a review of early intervention practices commissioned by the NZMoE identified the importance of a Māori conception of special needs including a conception of giftedness (Alliston & Research New Zealand, 2007) yet mentioned nothing about any other culture's concept of giftedness.

The conception of giftedness within the Māori context is well documented through research (Bevan-Brown, 1992, 2005, 2009). Bevan-Brown (1992) concludes that teachers working with Māori children with special needs must have a sound knowledge of Māori "knowledge, skills, attitudes, processes, reo, practices, resources, customs, values and beliefs"

(Bevan-Brown, 1992, p. 374). Bevan-Brown also recommends that teachers ensure that they are focusing on the areas of relevance to Māori. The recent government initiative *Ka Hikitia* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2013a) also reflects this objective, emphasising the role that Māori tamariki play as "kaitiaki (guardians) of Māori identity, language and culture" (p.17). Certain skills, dispositions and aspirations are highly valued within the context of the Māori culture, and these must be recognised, valued and fostered by the teacher that works with Māori gifted individuals.

Perhaps in response to this lack of direction by the NZMoE, private individuals have initiated programmes to cater to the needs of young children whom they assess as having gifted potential (Small Poppies, 2014). The neoliberal governance enables this form of community based response. This programme offers enrichment to gifted children, but only for children over the age of three. Small Poppies also requires an adult to attend with the child for the duration of the session; working families who seek this extension could not use this service without extra adult support.

If the NZMoE positions early childhood teachers as those with the expertise to offer advice on meeting gifted children's needs, there should be sufficient guidelines and policies to inform teachers on what these needs are, and how to implement educational practice to address them. In order to address the discrepancy between school and early childhood education and care, instruction on giftedness within teacher education programmes could broaden teachers' understandings of their expectations as a teacher. Currently, undergraduate and postgraduate opportunities for education on giftedness, is limited reducing the opportunities for teachers to build the expertise they are positioned as having. This scant provision limits teachers' awareness of the research-based theoretical concepts of giftedness in young children (Riley & Rawlinson, 2005; M. Wong & Hansen, 2012).

# Conclusion and Outline of Chapters

**Conclusion**

The contemporary early childhood and gifted education contexts of Aotearoa New Zealand are shaped by historical discursive constructions of giftedness, and early childhood education and care. While social and governmental investment into early childhood education and care is promoted as more economically effective than later remedial measures, this investment is tempered by the neoliberal approach to governance which promotes a 'free-market' for early childhood education.

There are tensions between voluntary participation in early childhood education and care, the designation of financial responsibility, and governmental intervention to increase attendance to near mandatory levels of participation. Economic arguments influence governmental strategies deeming who should be targeted to participate within early childhood education and care to maximise later national benefits, however the privatisation of early childhood education and care promotes the individualised benefits from early education. Questions regarding the responsibility of this education (including financial responsibility) are raised when current economic practices are compared and contrasted with historical discursive practices.

In promoting almost absolute participation within early childhood education and care, the government undertakes the responsibility to provide excellence in educational provision for all participants in early childhood education and care. However there are disparities in educational opportunities for infants and toddlers, which are informed by historic dominant discursive positioning of the place of the infant within the context of the home rather than early childhood education and care. Discourses and discursive practices relating to women have situated certain models of early childhood education as either acceptable or shunned. The historic discursive image of the 'unfortunate' child who must attend the education and

care centre influences contemporary research into the presumed negative effects of involvement in early childhood education and care.

Likewise, the domain of giftedness and gifted education is highly contested. Historical discursive positions contest the notion of giftedness. Despite this colloquial legacy, the NZMoE supports a socially and culturally mediated definition of giftedness. Some early childhood teachers refute or are uncertain whether giftedness exists (Keen, 2005). Calls for a cohesive concept of giftedness to align these disparate views may have more ill affect in the promotion of a hegemonic view and approach to giftedness. There is also a discrepancy of governmental provision for gifted education within the early childhood sector in relation to provision for older children, with the primary and secondary sectors afforded direction and resources far beyond those for early childhood. Given the acceptance and promotion of giftedness by the government, there are problems with the perspectives on giftedness held by teachers.

Taking into consideration the varied views on giftedness and gifted education within the domain of early childhood, investigation into teachers who are nominated by gifted education communities and early childhood communities as exemplary teachers of gifted education for infants and toddlers could present insights into the construction of their concepts of giftedness as representative of exemplary practice. This research will highlight the discourses that inform perceptions of giftedness and gifted education, and critically analyse the impact the governance of early childhood education for gifted children. By the completion of this study, I hope to highlight dominant discourses of giftedness within early childhood educational practice in Aotearoa New Zealand and problematise the relationship between the community's discursive image of the exemplary teacher of gifted infants and toddlers, and the perceptions of giftedness and gifted education held by the teachers who are positioned as exemplary.

**Outline of chapters**

This chapter introduced the focus of the thesis and provided a broad overview of the context of the thesis topic within Aotearoa New Zealand. Chapter two elucidates the theoretical positioning of knowledge which informs the investigation of the study. Chapter three reviews the literature relevant to the study. Chapter four outlines the methodology and modes of inquiry undertaken to source the data. Chapters five through eight outline the findings and analysis of the data. Chapter nine discusses the data in relation to the discourse of exemplary and the overarching problems with the governmentality of gifted education. Chapter ten will synthesise the points of the thesis, outline the limitations to the study, pose additional questions to be considered for future investigation, and outline some final considerations.

# Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

## Introduction

In the process of outlining the theoretical framework for this study, I will outline paradigmatic positions that have impacted upon social science/education research, and research into giftedness. I will discuss how modernism through positivist science has normalised developmental discourse and how this normalisation has impacted upon definitions of giftedness. From this I will discuss the role that the theories of Michel Foucault have in my inquiry, specifically how the terms postmodern, post-structural, and anti-structural are positioned in relation to Foucault. Following this I will discuss the theories of Michel Foucault that impact specifically upon this thesis. This will include a discussion of the notion of power/knowledge, governmentality, political economy and neoliberalism. In relation to giftedness and the infant and toddler, an analysis of the dominant discourses informing these concepts within research and theoretical publications in the education and giftedness disciplines will be explored. Finally, the contesting discourses which inform the images of the gifted individual, and the infant/toddler will be discussed to investigate the subject positions made available for the infant and toddler who is positioned as gifted. Some questions will be asked regarding the power relations that teachers engage in when constructing giftedness in relation to the young child.

## The Concept of Giftedness: Framed and Reframed

Within this section I will investigate how differing philosophical frameworks that are relevant to my study have served to construct giftedness. I will investigate how philosophical theories applied to research into social science/education and the concept of giftedness have

influenced how concepts of giftedness have been normalised into the sphere of westernised education, and Aotearoa/New Zealand.

**Modernism and giftedness.**

Modernism is the overarching term given to smaller movements within many fields of knowledge and creativity. The modernist movements signify a rejection of traditional ideologies and celebrates ways of thinking that more accurately reflect a modern industrial society (Shukla, 2008). Modernist theory is more specifically defined when applied to a particular investigative or creative field, as it can encapsulate different ideas when it is pertaining to distinctive domains of knowledge (Shiach, 2010)

Modernism informs research methods necessary to my study, which in turn influences the position I take as a researcher. Therefore I will investigate how the modernist paradigm within the scientific domain influenced social science and educational research and practices, research into gifted education, and how this research constructs notions of what it means to be gifted.

The modernist paradigm for research originates from the schism between natural scientists and the clergy regarding the incompatibility between scientific reason and theological theory (Smyth, 2003). Research by enlightenment scientists (Hooke 1635-1703, Wren 1632-1723, Newton 1642-1727) was heavily influenced by religious dogma, yet characterised by an adherence to a rational approach to investigation, seeking empirical evidence for phenomena separate from metaphysical religious beliefs. The incompatibility of religious dogmatism with empirical science culminated in research conducted by Darwin (1809-1882). Darwin's (1859) evolutionary theory heralded a modernist age of research

where logical science became separate from the faith based truths of the Church of England (Cahoone, 2003). The modernist approach to research is characterised by an adherence to logic, and observation based approaches. This approach became known as the positivist approach to science. Positivism contends that truth can only be derived from scientific investigation utilising the senses of the researcher to logically and mathematically deduce findings (Brewer, 2003). Positivism presupposes that a single universal reality exists, that understanding of this reality can be determined through objective measurement by the researcher. Darwin's theory (1859) maintains this approach, seeking unifying theories to explain how the world works. Within positivist research, findings take on an axiomatic form, theories are transmuted into facts, unyielding and unquestionable truths that "transcend opinion and personal bias" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 7). These truths are accepted due to the privileged position of the scientific domain in countries colloquially called 'western society' (Richter, 1995). These truths then become normalised through their acceptance and reification as reality by the members of society, instead of being understood as theories that are a product of a particular philosophical framework, they are upheld as facts (Foucault, 1979).

Modernism, through the positivist approach to research, affected social science and educational research through utilisation of an empirical scientific method. Positivist research into giftedness, prior to Piaget's universal theory of human development, influenced by Darwin's (1859) positivistic approach, also sought a single unifying theory for giftedness. Terman's (Terman, 1925) research of the concept of giftedness upheld many of the tenets of the positivist philosophy of science, particularly in seeking a singular universal theory of giftedness and the assumption that behaviour can be predicted and objectively measured. Conducted utilising empirical methods, Louis Terman's (Terman, 1925) research of the concept of giftedness has been highly influential upon the domain of research and educational

theory and practice for giftedness (Robinson, 2006). Terman's (Terman, 1925) research pioneered standardised testing methods for the assessment of giftedness in children through the use of the Stanford Revision of the Binet–Simon Scale (commonly known as the Standford-Binet test). The Standford-Binet test was considered an objective method in which one could identify the intelligence of an individual. Terman (Terman, 1925) used this test to identify giftedness in his test subjects. This research served to normalise standardised based testing methods to assess giftedness in children and pioneered the definition if giftedness as equating to a high IQ score (Terman, 1925). Historically, early IQ tests were administered by teachers, but Terman asserted that only trained psychologists could provide an "accurate diagnosis" (Terman 1919 p. xi, cited in Galitis, 2009, p. 34) of gifted ability. This positivist research tradition particularly through the utilisation of standardised intelligence quotient testing measures, has persisted within the contemporary research sphere (Abroms, 1982; Colombo et al., 2009), and within educational practice (Ambrose, 2013; Dai, 2013; Matthews, 2012), and normalised the concept of giftedness as synonymous with intelligence.

When investigating human behaviour, positivist social scientists presupposed that causes of human behaviour can be identified, manipulated, and predicted. Within the positivist paradigm, the assumption of a singular universal reality presumed a singular unifying theory of human development. One of the most influential unifying theories of human development upon the field of educational philosophy and practice (Suzy Edwards, 2003) was constructed by Jean Piaget (1896-1980). Within Piaget's (1952) theory, human development was compartmentalised into discreet ages and stages, the sensory motor stage from birth to two years; the pre-operational stage from two to seven years; the concrete operational stage from seven to eleven years; and the formal operations stage from eleven to sixteen years (Piaget, 1952). Piaget's universal theory of human development heavily influenced educational theory and practice. By normalising concepts of development theory,

children were expected to fit into discreet stages according to their biological age. A legacy of developmental discourse prevails as contemporary teaching ratios and designation of physical spaces are regulated according to a child's biological age (New Zealand Government, 2008). 'Developmentally Appropriate Practice' was formed utilising Piagetian theory, and adopted by the education system of New Zealand (Nuttall & Edwards, 2007). The national early childhood curriculum document, *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) was created utilising developmental theory (Mutch, 2001), consequently this philosophical theory is also normalised into contemporary pedagogical practice.

Within the framework of Piaget's universal theory of human development, giftedness is observed as behaviours which are beyond the appropriate stage relative to the child's biological age. Understandings of giftedness that are based upon a lineal developmental framework seek out to quantify the child according to ever increasing levels of complexity by utilising the construct of the 'developmental stage' to inform what a child should be doing and achieving, relational to an individual's age.

In summary, the rejection of faith-based 'truth' and the search for an empirical 'truth' resulted in the positivist approach to scientific research. Within giftedness research, the positivist approach informed Terman's (1925) study into giftedness, generating the Stanford-Binet test, which is still highly influential today. Within social science research, the empirical scientific method and the vision of a single unifying theory influenced the design for Piaget's (1952) theory of human development. This theory has had a major impact upon educational practices in Aotearoa New Zealand through its inclusion in the national curriculum document *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996).

**Postmodernism, anti-structuralism, post-structuralism, deconstruction, and giftedness.**

*Purpose for considering these paradigms.*

Akin to modernism, postmodernism is a movement that has differing applicability within varying fields of knowledge. Postmodernist paradigms are primarily concerned with the rejection of the unifying theories that are present within modernist paradigms, or an ''incredulity towards metanarratives'' (Lyotard, 1984, p. xxiv). Research which is framed within a postmodern paradigm reflects a multiplicity of knowledge, and perspectives of individuals. Knowledge is framed within Anti-structuralist and post-structuralist paradigms maintain postmodern concerns, yet view information in differing ways. There are tensions between the usage of the terms anti-structural and post-structural as the poststructuralist label has been applied to philosophers who chose not to embrace this positioning (Foucault 1926-1984, Derrida, 1930-2004). Deconstructionism is one of many postmodern theories and a method of postmodern inquiry. However, deconstruction can be perceived as both a structuralist and anti-structuralist act, as deconstruction is concerned with dissembling structures, but necessitates the requirement of a structure in order to disassemble (Derrida, 1988). Consequently, the principles and precepts of anti-structuralism, post-structuralism and deconstruction intertwine and repel each other in many areas. While I have unpacked their precepts separately, I feel it is necessary to discuss them together in one section as these labels have been applied to or utilised by Michel Foucault (1926-1984), whose theoretical work is central to this thesis. It is the consideration of the work of Foucault, and some wider bodies of work which consider his theory, which shape the theoretical framework of my study. The theoretical framework of this study is informed by the theories of Foucault (and some wider bodies of work which maintain his theories), consequently in light of Foucault's designation as 'postmodern', 'anti-structuralist' or 'post-structuralist', and the influence of the act of deconstruction upon his work, these paradigms are explored.

***Locating 'postmodern', 'anti-structuralist', 'post-structuralist' and 'deconstruction'.***

Post-structuralism stemmed from a rejection of the structuralist movement. Within the structural and post-structural paradigms, language and text are structures that serve to construct, disseminate and thus politicise meaning, particularly where it influences individual subjectivities, and other societal structures. Structuralists believe that an overarching theory for human culture can be derived from how individuals within interrelate through language. Post-structuralism is concerned with highlighting the incoherence of language without a relative frame of societal convention (Seidman, 2011). Where structuralism is often defined as descriptive, post-structuralism utilises history as a means of making sense of how language and texts are interpreted. Post-structuralists draw attention to the contextualised information contained within the text, in order to highlight implicit and tacit assumptions the reader must make in order to comprehend the text.

Anti-structuralism is characterised by the same aspiration to draw attention to the contextualised meanings contained within the text, asserting "there is nothing outside the text" (Derrida, 1976, p. 158). However, anti-structuralism is separate from post-structuralism as anti-structuralism asserts a reliance upon the structure in order to be able to deconstruct it (Derrida, 1988). Anti-structuralism also rejects the concept that there can be a post-structuralism, a way of conceptualising the world beyond or without structures. Derrida and Foucault have both been labelled as post-structural, yet Derrida distances himself, claiming post-structuralism was "a word unknown in France until it's "return" from the United States" (Derrida, 1988, p. 3). However, Foucault declares "I don't see who could be more of an anti-structuralist than myself" (Foucault, 1980a, p. 114). There are problems with this statement, as although Foucault aligned himself with an 'anti-structuralist' perspective, many current writers associate Foucault with a post-structuralist paradigm.

Deconstructionism has also been associated with Foucauldian theory, as a method of identifying discursive languages contained within a text. Deconstructionism does not negate constructs, and is neither an analysis nor a critique (Derrida, 1988). Deconstructionism is rather a question to be posed and reposed not defined, for deconstruction itself must be continually deconstructed, and understood for how it is contextualised and understood within the text (Derrida, 1976). Deconstructionism is concerned with searching for the multiplicity of meanings in the structure, rather than a singular unifying theory.

Postmodernist methods of inquiry are characterised by their rejection of the tenets of the positivist paradigm (Agger, 1991). Postmodernism rejects positivist researchers' emphasis on singular unifying theories, and the exclusivity of empirical evidence to deduce findings (Lyotard, 1984). Postmodernist researchers instead draw upon the multiplicity of knowledge, experience and interrelationships to illustrate their study findings. Anti-structuralism and post-structuralism reject positivism through identifying the politicised nature of language and texts. Anti-structuralist and post-structuralist researchers reject the positivist notion of a unifying theory when it is expressed with a language system that is loaded with convention. Deconstruction also draws attention to multiplicity of meanings. This rejection of the aims of positivism is a point of convergence for these differing methods of inquiry.

Language and the text play a vital role within anti-structuralism, post-structuralism and deconstruction. Post-structural and anti-structural theory views language as a means of constructing, disseminating and thus politicising meaning. Post-structuralism and anti-structuralism shift the focus from "interpretation of phenomena to the representation of phenomena" (Linstead, 2009, p. 704), rejecting a singular interpretation in favour of a complex representation of the structure through an analysis of the discourses that construct the structure. Discourse is a term utilised by post-structuralists, anti-structuralists and deconstructionists for contextualised language within the text. Discourses are tacit meanings

incorporated into the text, and implying a common contemporary societal convention. Discourses are interpreted as truth or common sense. Discourses serve to normalise theories, and thus impact upon people's behaviours; discourses reinforce cultural dogmas surrounding conceptual ideals (Foucault, 1971). Post-structuralists and anti-structuralists may utilise deconstruction to interpret a text; however there are other methods that also may be employed for example, discourse analysis.

In summary, post-structuralism, anti-structuralism, and deconstructionism are all related to postmodernist paradigms, yet each approach is concerned with expressing postmodern ideologies in a different way. From here, I will investigate the impact of these theories in social and educational research, research into giftedness, and definitions of giftedness.


### *Postmodern, anti-structuralist or post-structuralist and giftedness*

When applied to social research, postmodernist researchers investigate by representing the multiple perspectives of the people involved in the research. Postmodern researchers contend that the parochial nature of empirical evidence fails to reflect the multiplicity of human experience (Lyotard, 1984). The modernist developmental conception of a singular image of the 'child' or notion of a universal 'childhood' is challenged by postmodernist frames. Postmodern researchers conceptualise childhoods as multitudinous, individualised, and constructed through dominant societal discourses (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 2007). Alternate theories for human development emerged (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Vygotsky, 1929) which incorporated a more individualised vision of human development than Piaget's (1952) theory. Bronfenbrenner' ecological theory, and Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory emphasised the individualised nature of human development. Whilst still modernist in their approach, these theories of human development were more aligned to the postmodernist concerns than previous theories, and were adopted by educationalists within Aotearoa New Zealand through

their inclusion in the design of the national early childhood curriculum document *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996). By including these theories into the national curriculum, they have become contextualised and normalised within the educational domain.

Post-structural and anti-structural approaches to educational research are concerned with drawing attention to this contextualised information, through an analysis of the discourses that are embedded within the structure. Discourses are societal conventions of language that inform how we perceive the world and interpret the world, and when a particular discourse dominates a particular system, this is construed as a dominant discursive regime (Foucault, 2013). Post-structural and anti-structural research are concerned with unveiling dominant discursive regimes that underpin discourse, inform language and silence the 'other', acknowledging that "its truths are always partial and provisional and that it can never fully know or rescue the other" (MacLure, 2011, p. 997).

Ideologically, postmodern giftedness research is not consumed with seeking a singular definition, building towards a unifying theory with a final viewpoint at which the quintessence of giftedness will be uncovered (P. Moss & Petrie, 2002). When investigating giftedness, postmodernist researchers seek out the plurality of meaning as opposed to the modernist researcher's single unifying theory. Within the postmodernist frames, the positivist conclusions of Terman (Terman, 1925) neither account for diverse forms of giftedness, nor the mutability of giftedness over time. Globalisation, through computerisation has enabled educational researchers' access to conceptualisations of giftedness from many different cultures. These increased levels of cross-cultural communication, have facilitated research into constructions of giftedness conceptualised within indigenous and marginalised cultures (Bevan-Brown, 1992; Sternberg, 2007; Vidergor & Eilam, 2012). These multiple ways of conceiving giftedness have contributed to a definition of giftedness more aligned with postmodernist views. Alternate definitions of giftedness to Terman's (Terman, 1925) singular

modernist definition has furthered the assertion that giftedness is defined culturally, and cannot be considered a universal construct (Persson, 2012). Teachers have been identified using a range of measures to assess giftedness (Brown et al., 2005), as opposed to a single intelligence quotient test. However within research, theories, methods and paradigms underpinning giftedness research have altered little from modernist roots (Sternberg, 2012).

Post-structuralists and anti-structuralists conceptualise giftedness as a constructed phenomenon, rather than a singular entity. giftedness is a product of discursive constructs that are negotiated between individuals and societies (Gergen, 1999). Post-structuralists and anti-structuralists conceptualise giftedness as a societal product that can only be understood through the contextualised language associated with giftedness. Therefore, to the post-structuralist and anti-structuralist researcher uncovering the historical discourses and discursive practices surrounding the construction giftedness are of primary importance.

In summary, postmodernist paradigms have somewhat impacted upon research and definitions of giftedness. Critiques of universal theories of human development have served to aid the critique of modern positivist research into giftedness. Post-structuralist and anti-structuralist theory have provided a means to politicise modernist definitions of giftedness through a deconstruction of their language to reveal the tacit discourses contained within the text. From here I will discuss more in-depth the Foucauldian theories which will frame this thesis, and investigate the discourses that impact upon my study.

# Giftedness and Power/Knowledge

**Foucault's power/knowledge.**

> *Power has its principle not so much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up. (Foucault, 1979, p. 202)*

Foucault was engaged in locating power by exploring power relations between individuals (Foucault, 1996). Foucault explicates further, stating "If I were asked what I do…I would say that we study dynasties…we try to bring to light what has remained until now the most hidden, the most occulted, the most deeply invested experience in the history of our culture – power relations" (Foucault, 2001a, p. 17). Foucault was concerned with critiquing the modernist constructions of power relationships, specifically the relevance of the sovereign model of power, in which power is defined as either involving consent or coercion (Gergen, 1999). Foucault rejected the notion of power being a direct action between autocratic individuals or factions and subjugated individuals (Foucault, 2000). Instead, Foucault sought to represent power relationships within everyday ways of being, or conventional constructs. These constructs are implemented through institutions he called disciplines (Foucault, 1979). Disciplines are programmes for behaviour, for example organisation of physical space, time, and appropriate ways of acting. According to Foucault "discipline 'makes' individuals" (Foucault, 1979, p. 170). Individuals conform within these acts because they are normalised within society as "an average to be respected or an optimum towards which one must move" (Foucault, 1979, p. 183). Disciplines then become normalised through the discourses of the society, the enactment of the "permanent reactivation of the rules" (Foucault, 1971, p. 17). It is through discourse that disciplines become a method of control, through the compulsion to

achieve this 'optimum' and a desire to reach the 'average' by which individuals are subjugated.

Foucault's conceptualisation of discourse stemmed from the rejection of the modernist concept of a contiguous definition of a singular truth (Foucault & Miskowiec, 1986). Foucault sought out moments in history where transformations occurred, redefining what society considered true in order to expose the discontinuous nature of society. Foucault identified the necessity for individuals to understand the discourses, or the contextual information implicit in these truths in order to comprehend and assent to them would alter depending upon which epoch they were constructed in (Foucault, 1984a). Foucault then exposed the concept of truth as a theoretical position, mutable and shifting over time. Foucault contended that it was and is through discursive language and practice, compounded with the privileged position accredited to scientific method within western society, that normalised and these theorems and transmuted them into truth (Foucault, 1980a). The individual in society conforms to discourses underpinning the mechanisms of disciplines, without even realising the ways in which s/he is being subjugated. By representing these disciplines and discourses to individuals and locating the position of power behind these theoretical truths their mutability would be exposed. Foucault intended for individuals to then reconstruct and reclaim power for themselves (Foucault, 1988b).

Foucault states "it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together" (Foucault, 1978, p. 100). Power and knowledge are interwoven through discourse through their construction as legitimate knowledge(Foucault, 2006). Consequently, discourse acts as a mechanism of power, by reifying legitimate knowledge through discursive practices which then validate and legitimise said knowledge in a cycle of privilege and subjugation. Discursive practices create subject positions, locating individuals within the discourse, and creating opportunities for multiple subjectivities across varying discourses. Discourses

construct the disciplines, which in turn promotes or suppresses subject positions through disciplinary or pleasurable actions and normalises or abnormalises ways of being. These actions are undertaken through dominant discursive regimes, or regimes of truth which describe how individuals perceive reality, and define truth or falsehood relative to the discipline, and prescribing this to the individuals (Foucault, 1984a).

Foucault deems power and knowledge to be intertwined, stating "the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power" (Foucault, 1980a, p. 52). Knowledge and power are interrelated through the ways in which they interact and imply each other (Foucault, 2012). Foucault considers knowledge to be a constructed element disseminated through discourse to reinforce positions of power (Foucault, 2012). But if knowledge is inextricable from power, one could question if power can be redressed when change is formed through these power relations (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998a). There is a question of whether individuals can promote situational change if they are unaware of the ways in which they are constructed through power relations by discourse. Some researchers argue, within the educational frame the employment of critical pedagogy in highlighting and thus readdressing power relations is a means to contest subjugation and inequitable practice (Akast, 2012; Fenech & Sumsion, 2007), through utilisation of alternate discourse to realise and conceptualise aspects of education. However the employment of critical pedagogy solicits one to view power as a direct form of external oppression, rather than located within constructs (McLaren, 1998).

In summary, power is located in conventional constructs, or discourses. These discourses are then enacted through disciplines. The privileged position knowledge produced by the scientific method has served to particular normalise discourses as facts, which then are reified as truth by societal members. The construction of knowledge, particularly legitimate knowledge, and power are interrelated. Discourses serve as a method of power and control for

individuals within a society through their desire to fit the norm. Discourses are a form of control of individuals through disciplinary programmes. From here I will discuss discourses that are relevant to my study.

**Foucault's governmentality, political economy, and the neoliberal discourse.**

In the 1977-1978 and 1978-9 lecture series at the Collège de France, Foucault analysed the art of governance or "the reasoned way of governing best and, at the same time, reflection on the best possible way of governing" (Foucault, 2008c, p. 2). In an analysis of governmental practices over history, Foucault questioned sovereignty, the state and civil society as universal objects. Foucault posited that the sovereign, sovereignty, the people, the state and civil society as 'universals' did not exist and used varying examples of governmental practices over history to investigate how these objects are constituted through these practices.

Foucault proposed that the question of governance from the eighteenth century no longer concerned legitimacy, rights or freedom; the question of governance concerned limitations and the excessive involvement of government in the climate of a 'political economy'. Within a political economy governance involves regulating not in response to legality or moral correctness, but to promote a positive economy; the value of these effects will be in their economic success or failure, not legitimacy or illegitimacy, or alignment with divine law.

According to Foucault, a 'political economy' is concerned with ensuring "suitable, adjusted, and always favorable competition between states…an equilibrium between states such that competition can take place" (Foucault, 2008c, p. 14). Governance within the political economy is concerned with the following question: "Am I governing at the border between the too much and too little?" (Foucault, 2008c, p. 19). Historical governmental intervention was concerned with enacting methods of market control to promote pure

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competition. In the past the primary approach was for government to desist from intervention to undertake a 'lassez-nous faire' (leave us alone) approach, an approach Foucault broadly identifies as 'liberalism'. In contrast, the contemporary neoliberal approach involves intervention to promote the market, or "taking the formal principles of a market economy and referring and relating them to, of projecting them on to a general art of government" (Foucault, 2008c, p. 131). Where liberalism adopts a 'lassez-nous faire' approach, a neoliberal approach promotes the theory that competition is not a product of natural 'unfettered' market conditions, but rather the product of a structured act of intercession; the concern of neoliberal governance is to promote competition through "permanent vigilance, activity, and intervention" (Foucault, 2008c, p. 132); governmental practices position economic principles as the guidelines for correct governance, promoting a dominant economic discourse. These practices promote "the strategic programming of individuals' activity" (Foucault, 2008c, p. 223).

Neoliberal discourses promote the image of the economic man, the 'homo œconomicus' as both a consumer and a producer. Homo œconomicus is the term for individuals positioned within the economic discourse that are defined according to economic rationality, within the grid of economic intelligibility. Within economic discourses, the homo œconomicus is a partner to economic governmental rationality (Foucault, 2008b). Collective notions of society and community are rationalised into discreet individual 'production units'; individualism is promoted over collectivism. The production of capital is not only measured in monetary/labour terms, but also in 'human capital', which is that which cannot be separated from the "human individual who is it's bearer" (Foucault, 2008c, p. 226). In applying a theory of 'human capital', economic analysis can be applied by neoliberal governments in new ways to new domains, and investment into this 'human capital', or in the case of children, in their 'future potential human capital' (and the transference of 'human capital' from parents to

children and children to parents) is argued to be quantifiable. In this way, the smallest minutia of development of children "can be analysed in terms of investment, capital costs, and profit—both economic and psychological profit—on the capital invested" (Foucault, 2008c, p. 244).

In summary, the art of governance in a neoliberal political economy is concerned with the level of interventions, regulations and policies designed to promote market competition. While this sets boundaries on actions of individuals, these are seen to be productive boundaries in reflection of the productive nature of economic man, as this form of governance sustains the "responsibilization of moral agents and the active reconstruction of the relation between government and self-government" (Besley & Peters, 2007, p. 133). These governmental strategies promote the dominance of the economic discourse, constructing images and promoting specific subject positions for individuals. The economic discourse constructs the child in light of their 'future potential'; governmental actions are undertaken in light of this discursive image.

**Discourses surrounding childhood, the infant, and the toddler.**

> *[Institutions say] we're here to show you discourse is within the established order of things, that we've waited a long time for its arrival, that a place has been set aside for it - a place which both honours and disarms it; and if it should happen to have a certain power, then it is we, and we alone, who give it that power. (Foucault, 1971, p. 8)*

Dominant discourses, maintained by varying disciplines, serve to limit the "discursive positions that are available for children to experience their lives" (Duncan, 2010, p. 100). These dominant discourses, or regimes of truth, construct an image of childhood. According to Farquhar and Fleer (2007) "every construction or formulation of the term 'childhood' is an exercise of power" (S. Farquhar & Fleer, 2007, p. 34). Consequently the images of childhood

constructed through dominant discourses serve to denote or withhold power over the children in society through discursive practices, or disciplines. These dominant discourses denote appropriate behaviour for children through conventionalised dictums (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998b). Disciplines are not power, they are one way of enacting power (Rouse, 2005). It is in discourse where the nexus of the power/knowledge dichotomy lies (Akast, 2012).

When examined through Foucault's Power/Knowledge relationship (where power affects the construction of the concept of legitimate knowledge which is then perpetuated and reinforced through everyday power relationships) discourses of childhood establish power dynamics between individuals. Individuals are indoctrinated into the discourses through their normalisation in society. In turn these normalised discourses of 'childhood' are reified by the individuals in the life of the infant and toddler (parents, whānau, teachers) through the choices they make for (behavioural patterns, environmental features), and their interactions with the infant and toddler. How teachers interact with children influence children's sense of self perception (Merry, 2004). These dominant discourses affect the infant and toddlers emerging self-identity by regulating the responses and explorations the infants and toddlers engage in (Akast, 2012), and through the imposition of a conception of childhood upon the infant and toddler.

This has implications for how power relationships are constructed between children and adults, for if constructions of the concepts of childhood are not *of* the child but rather *for* the child, then they overlook the child's own sense of identity, and construction of their subjectivity. Dominant discursive regimes surrounding 'childhood' are unreflective of the myriad of possibilities and complexities of children or childhoods (P. Moss & Petrie, 2002, p. 21). Tensions between adults' perceptions informed by these discourses, and the perceptions of the child, and their vision of what they can do continue to problematise the concept of 'child' for educators and parents alike.

This is particularly pertinent in the conceptualisation of the infant. Infants are conceptualised as innocent and vulnerable, yet they are equally constructed as needy, demanding, and requiring a highly structured routine to conform with normative expectations (Nyland & Rockel, 2007). Internationally, empiricist traditions still dominate much of the research surrounding the infant (Ropeter & Pauen, 2013; Schafer, 2005; Schaub, Bertin, & Cacchione, 2013; Tenenbaum, Shah, Sobel, Malle, & Morgan, 2013), seeking a uniform definition of the infant, positioning this conceptualisation within the frame of modernist traditions and its search for generalising theories (Cannella, 1997). This tradition, and the discourses associated with it, continue to permeate pedagogical practice in New Zealand, despite infants displaying increasingly high levels of competency and capability in research (M. Cooper et al., 2012; Mortlock et al., 2005; Tardos, 2012), and the complexity of infants' lived experiences (McCaleb, 2004). Conceptualisations of infancy are normalised and appropriate methods of action and interaction are constructed by theoretical positions that underpin them. These theoretical underpinnings affect how children are perceived, and how individuals interact with them (Dahlberg et al., 2007).

In the realm of toddlerhood dominant discursive images of the 'temperamental toddler' are constructed through research (Cipriano & Stifter, 2010; Garner & Dunsmore, 2011; Neppl et al., 2010; Szabó et al., 2008). Cannella (1997) emphasises the influence developmental theory has had upon infant and toddler research, contending "perhaps this difficulty applies to all human behavior and our attempts to interpret that behavior, or even in the belief that behavior reveals the human being. Perhaps the difficulty is actually embedded in the notion of progressive development, in the belief that there exists a human developmental Truth and that we can interpret that Truth." (p. 56).This developmental focus is reinforced through text produced and disseminated by the NZMoE, notably within *Quality early childhood education for under-two-year-olds: What should it look like? A literature review* (Dalli, White, Rockel,

Dunn, Davidson, Ganly, Kus & Wang, 2011). Developmental discourse dominates the text, and educators are instructed to respond to infants and toddlers according to "their temperamental and age characteristics" (Dalli et al., 2011, p. 3). In this, the interrelation of power/knowledge is enacted through the indoctrination of teachers into this discourse through the NZMoE's promotion of this document as a truth. Thus the temperamental toddler discourse acts as a mechanism of power, teachers reify this discourse through their pedagogy, which, through the discourses of the teacher as a professional within the field of education, validates and legitimises this knowledge for the individuals they interact with (parents, whānau, children), continuing the cycle of privilege and subjugation.

These normalised perceptions of toddlers are "familiar discourse about the very young child – one that looks at children 'becoming', 'incomplete' and 'lacking' in terms of child development" (Duncan, 2005, p. 5). These discourses of childhood, originating in empiricist research, such as developmental psychology (Piaget, 1952) construct conceptualisations of the infant and toddler that compartmentalise their abilities and normalise their behaviours to fit (or be lacking) within a general model for development. These discourses impact upon the practices of the early childhood teacher by attempting to predict the behaviour of the child, denoting what the teacher should expect from the child, and prescribing how the teacher should then interact with the child (Dahlberg et al., 2007). According to Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (2007), this enables a dividing practice, where legitimate knowledge constructed through empiricist science serves to exclude children from potential capabilities, controls their educational opportunities, and manipulate them into the desire to attain normative competencies (Dahlberg et al., 2007).

It has been argued that the theory of human development by Piaget (1952) has become a regime of truth to the point at which educators no longer question the underlying constructs of the terms used in their daily practice (Cannella, 1997). Consequently the discourse of child

development has limited the possible worlds for the infant and toddler, as they are expected to conform to these restraining perspectives, "never revealing their real worlds, the worlds that go beyond what we have conceived." (Cannella, 1997, p. 59).

A discursive image of the child 'becoming' and 'incomplete' is supported by dominant neoliberal economic discourse promoted through governmental strategies. The image of the child as a being of 'future potential capital' places primacy upon the future actions and achievements of the child rather than their present state. Decisions are made consideration of this 'future potential human capital' which affect not only the child's current experiences, but the opportunities made available for their future. This discursive image of the child limits the importance of the child's current voice; this voice is displaced by the value invested into the child's 'future self', subjugating the child in veneration of the adult they will become.

Children are considered the private responsibility of the parents, yet dominant discourses surrounding the marketisation of early childhood education promote contracting out the role of parenting to educational providers under the auspices of doing so for the child's benefit, or as social good (S. Farquhar, 2010). This is particularly pervasive in social policy surrounding Māori participation within Early Childhood Services (New Zealand Families Commission, 2007), singling out Māori children as necessitating an intervention, displacing the mother and wider whānau (J. Ritchie & Rau, 2009). Moss and Petrie (2002) contend that these perceptions construct a vision of a 'poor and weak' child. It is in these circumstances that the relationship between power and knowledge through the medium of discourse serves as a form of manipulation. Rather than blending one for themselves, the child is denoted a personal and social identity, denying the infant's own agency.

The legacy of developmental psychology as a dominant discourse has undermined the construction of the child as multi-faceted, culturally located, powerful and as having a right to be a part of the society (Cannella, 2002; Nyland & Rockel, 2007). Teachers of gifted

education are indoctrinated with these discursive constructs in their training programmes (Sherwood, 1996; Vidergor & Eilam, 2011). These constructs serve to normalise definitions for the child and effect the perceptions teachers hold regarding the abilities of the child and impact upon their pedagogical practice (Dahlberg et al., 2007; David, 2011; Siegle, 2001; Speirs Neumeister, Adams, Pierce, Cassady, & Dixon, 2007)

In summary, dominant discourses, or regimes of truth, construct images of childhood that impact upon the power denoted or withheld from the children they define. Infants and toddlers are limited by these discourses which fail to reflect the complexity of their lived experiences, constructing limited subject positions for children to live their lives and displacing a view of children as agentic beings. Neoliberal governance of early childhood promotes a discursive image of the child as lesser than their future potential selves, and stimulates a marketisation of childhood which has promoted discourses that displace the parents and whānau.


**Discourses surrounding giftedness.**

Within the most recent edition of the book *Gifted and Talented: New Zealand perspectives* (Moltzen, 2011a), Moltzen contends " we are further than ever from developing a universally accepted definition of giftedness and talent" (p.31). This contention is certainly reflected within the international literature (Subotnik et al., 2012; Ziegler et al., 2012) and literature contemplating giftedness in early childhood education within Aotearoa New Zealand.

Discourses surrounding giftedness contain similar issues to the discourses surrounding infants and toddlers. Conceptualisations of giftedness share an empirical research history, with a developmental psychology underpinning. A recent analysis of the theories surrounding giftedness (Ambrose, Tassel-Baska, Coleman, & Cross, 2010) proposed there have been no new theories generated by research into giftedness, instead that theories have been borrowed

from other fields, particularly from developmental psychology (Terman, 1925). These traditions impact upon contemporary conceptualisations and dominant discursive positions of giftedness. Inherent within the developmental discourse is an underlying value of the hierarchy of knowledge and progress, that modern thought is more enlightened than its forbearers, that modern post-industrial societies are more advanced, and thus superior to pre-industrial societies. The process of identification of giftedness undertaken by Terman (Terman, 1925) reflects this hierarchical approach. Academics are positioned as purveyors of legitimate knowledge, and are considered to be justified to be in a position "to observe those who are at lower levels as subjects to be studied and judged" (Cannella, 2002, p. 60). The dominant developmental discourse for defining giftedness and the search for a singular operational definition of giftedness promoted by Renzulli (2005) also corroborates the empirical tradition of the discipline of research into giftedness. Contemporary theorists have attempted to patch this approach and mediate it with postmodernist concerns regarding social relativism (Cohen, 2012), yet the modernist paradigm still exemplifies the approach, and "such tweaking and patching ultimately creates a cumbersome theory that does not represent reality very well" (Ambrose, Sternberg, & Sriraman, 2012, p. 5).

However, research into giftedness is not solely conducted within western society, nor underpinned by these theories. European research is underpinned by social-constructivism, and Confucianism has influenced Arabic and Indian educational research (Persson, 2012). Dominant discourses reflecting western-centric definitions of giftedness contest Māori definitions of giftedness (Bevan-Brown, 1992). Anchan (2012) argues, "in defining *giftedness* in one culture, a researcher may identify desirable features that may be irrelevant to the *Other*" (p. 74). Discursive language and the positioning of gifted individuals within the milieu of the research affect findings. However these generalisations regarding the nature of research within a particular cultural group must also be mediated further to reflect the diversity within

a culture, for "there may be a dominant culture, or the one the researcher belongs to, and therefore relates to, neglecting other existing cultures in a single country" (Vidergor, 2012, p. 77). The translation of international research findings into practice by the Aotearoa New Zealand teacher is problematic if discursive practices are not considered. The teachers' position of privilege as an educational professional, and the power relationships that he or she engages with daily with the infants and toddlers serve to legitimise the discourses he or she promotes, consequently the consideration of alternate discursive positioning of 'giftedness' within practices informed by international research findings must be considered.

In an increasingly interactive and global educational community, these foundational differences have "implications for the dissemination of knowledge and for how researchers communicate across borders" (Persson, 2012, p. 17). Thus, critical inquiry into the power/knowledge relationship of research into giftedness is becoming more prominent. Questions regarding the creation of legitimate knowledge are being asked within the discipline of gifted education (Garces-Bacsal, 2012). Concurrent with this is the growing need for teachers to deconstruct dominant discourse that affects their identification of giftedness in children (Ambrose, 2013), and combat an ethnocentric mind (Sisk, 2012).

Alternate discourse is emerging, questioning the necessity for a singular definition (Cramond, 2004), even contending that the search for a singular definition is "an undesirable aim, damaging to the knowledge base on giftedness by imposing a general, apparently culture-free, model, when what is required is the recognition and celebration of cultural variety and diversity in concepts of giftedness" (Smith & Campbell, 2012, p. 57). The growing awareness of the distinction between emic (where findings reflect one culture) and etic research (where findings reflect all cultures) problematises giftedness research conducted without these considerations (Gallagher, 2012). This is particularly pertinent in research deemed to be etic, yet is unconscious of the dominant discourses it upholds. Historic

definitions of giftedness are being deconstructed to make apparent the discourses that underpin them, drawing attention to the power/knowledge relationship that has positioned these definitions as legitimate knowledge enacted through disciplinary regimes. These disciplinary regimes subjugate the gifted infant or toddler and their family and whānau through standardised testing methods. These examinations into their giftedness delineate the gifted from the normal. Yet the legitimised knowledge underpinning these examinations is becoming a contested terrain. Therefore, gifted individuals are able to question the necessity to subscribe to an irrelevant disciplinary regime, to be labelled and explained according to the regime's precepts, when the regime is no longer valid (Gergen, 1999).

New ways of constructing giftedness are being interrogated, and other ways of defining and identifying giftedness in infants and toddlers beyond the empirical/modernist frame are being sought (C. E. Hughes & McGee, 2011). Additionally, questions regarding the ways in which research informs the discourses that underpin teachers' philosophy and pedagogy are being asked, for "if indeed some cultures and ethnic groups perceive giftedness through another lens, is it possible for educators to define goals for their children? Are we and culturally different groups perhaps at cross-purposes in our understanding of what is meant by giftedness?" (Harris, 2012, p. 50). These concerns echo concerns raised by Foucault, in whether individuals can promote situational change if they are unaware of the ways in which they are constructed through power relations by discourse (Dahlberg et al., 2007). The discourses surrounding giftedness are in a state of flux, and the field defined as "fractured, pluralised, and internally contested" (Ambrose et al., 2010, p. 463).

The fractured terrain of the domain of gifted research and education is further challenged by the discursive construction of the term gifted. The term gifted has contributed to a domain of theory and research which is multitudinous in its concepts and definitions. In Aotearoa New Zealand utilisation of the term gifted has been frequently discarded in favour

of other terms. Parkyn's study was entitled *Children of high intelligence: A New Zealand study* (Parkyn, 1948). Like Terman's (Terman, 1925) landmark study in giftedness, Parkyn's study was concerned with an academic-cognitive definition of giftedness in his participants. But where Terman utilised the term gifted (Terman, 1925) Parkyn resisted using the term gifted (Braggett & Moltzen, 2000; Moltzen, 2011b), utilising the term 'high intelligence' as the primary term. This practice was then echoed in 'The Hill Report' (Hill et al., 1971), which entitled a section referring to gifted children using the term "Children of above average ability" (Hill et al., 1971, p. 67). It is argued that historic use of alternate terms has affected contemporary discomfort with the term gifted within Aotearoa New Zealand, as teachers are uncomfortable applying the term gifted to children in early childhood settings (Gallagher, 2006).

Within the present day Aotearoa New Zealand educational domain, the term gifted is still only utilised sporadically (Keen, 2005), and is only recently becoming more common within early childhood educational policy and research (Bevan-Brown, 2005; Margrain, 2010; Margrain & Farquhar, 2011; New Zealand Ministry of Education et al., 2008; M. Smith, 2013). Individuals who are labelled or choose to label himself or herself as gifted negotiate multiple discursive images and subsequent subject positions as the term gifted is culturally and socially grounded. Alternate terms utilised by influential parties could serve to normalise their use within society, which serves to exclude and divide individuals who do not wish to fit within this construction (Foucault, 1971), and disestablish their collective need as a valid group of society.

The discursive construction of the term gifted is not limited to Aotearoa New Zealand. Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius and Worrell (2012) identify a number of alternate terms utilised in connection with gifted individuals, which assert a dominant developmental discourse (utilising the example of a 'precocious child' or an 'eminent' adult). Positivism has

heavily influenced research into giftedness; dominant developmental discourse in educational theory has influenced western definitions and research into giftedness. Within western giftedness research, developmental based definitions of giftedness have prevailed. However, developmental psychology decontextualises the child; by utilising this normalizing map we lose sight of complexity, and objectify children and ourselves as pedagogues and researchers (Dahlberg et al., 2007). These assessments could shed light on the perceived incompatibility between the tenets of early childhood education and gifted education, for if developmental discourse dominates gifted terminology, this contests the socio-cultural and ecological foci of *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996).

The discursive construction of giftedness as a 'label' limited utilisation of the term by early childhood educators according to research by Keen (2005). These educators argued that labels compartmentalise, placing limitations upon the child, which is incompatible with the image of the child promoted within the holistic education discourse upheld by *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996). These tensions are considered by gifted education writers Wong and Hansen (2013) who also address the inherent limitations of labelling children in their discussion of twice exceptional children (children who are gifted and have another special learning need). Wong and Hansen affirm that early childhood teachers "should be taught to avoid labelling children lest their practices for working with gifted and/or talented learners become stereotyped" (p. 12), yet argue labels are useful in providing a shared terminology or a common lexicon of a complex phenomenon. It is questionable whether common lexicon can be considered when differing discourses inform discursive images of the gifted child. Keen (2005) argues there is no common lexicon, and suggests that the early childhood domain should engage in "internal debate regarding its philosophy in relation to giftedness" (Keen, 2005, p. 210). Wong and Hansen (2013) assert that a lack of shared understanding of giftedness can have significant negative impacts for a

gifted child. There are problems with a call for a shared understanding akin to the call for 'unity' within the field of gifted education. While there are pragmatic and political consequences in not sharing a single unified definition, a unified and universal approach to giftedness does not support post-modernist paradigms of giftedness promoted by current theorists, and could result in a homogeneity which could exclude the abilities of many children.

In summary, positivism has served to define gifted according to a singular unifying theory, unrepresentative of the myriad of possibilities for giftedness. These positivist definitions also exclude varying cultural concepts of giftedness. Theories of giftedness are borrowed from other domains and the field of gifted education is yet to determine a theory. Presently, this lack of a single defining theory for giftedness is being perceived positively, as the relevance of a single definition is being questioned.

### *Giftedness positioned within a special needs discourse.*

'The Hill Report'(Hill et al., 1971) also associated the instruction of gifted children with that of children with special needs, claiming that if the needs of one group are addressed, then the other should not be ignored. The tension and interrelation between giftedness and special needs is still in existence within Aotearoa New Zealand (Chapman, 1992; D. Mitchell, 2010; Riley, Bevan-Brown, Bicknell, Carroll-Lind, & Kearney, 2004). One of the aims of the Working Party on Gifted Education (2001) was to "clarify the relationship between the education of gifted and talented students, and the education of students with special needs" (Working Party on Gifted Education, 2001).

Within the early childhood curriculum document *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) giftedness can only be interpreted as a special need as there is no other provision for gifted children within the document. When considered a 'special need' (as

within *Te Whāriki*), gifted education for children can be considered an issue of inclusive practice. Within the early childhood context, inclusionary practice is often closely connected with notions of equity and social justice (Gordon-Burns, Gunn, Perdue, & Surtees, 2012). In relation to inclusion of children with differing abilities, *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) clearly provisions for the educational needs of all learners, stating:

> *Te Whāriki is designed to be inclusive and appropriate for all children and anticipates that special needs will be met as children learn together in all kinds of early childhood education settings. The programmes of each centre will incorporate strategies to fully include children with special needs. (p.11)*

When giftedness is considered to be a special need there are clear provisions for the gifted learner within the early childhood curriculum.

However, the inclusion of giftedness within a special needs umbrella is challenged within Aotearoa New Zealand society. Dominant egalitarian views within Aotearoa New Zealand (Moltzen, 2004) which interpret giftedness as an 'advantage' (Working Party on Gifted Education, 2001) equally position individuals with special needs as 'disadvantaged' (Kearney & Kane, 2006). The term 'special needs' is also influenced by historical notions of disability, as disability discourse has arguably been supplanted by 'special needs' discourse, and is commonly used in a synonymic fashion (Kearney & Kane, 2006; Macartney & Morton, 2009). The discursive image of the 'special needs' individual as 'disabled' is informed when ability and disability are conceptualised within a didactic relationship, normalising ability and positioning disability as the 'other' (Lyons, 2012).

These discursive images are further problematised within contemporary discourse of special needs, special abilities and priority learners. Inclusive practice is currently mandated through governmental practice designating targeted learners as 'priority learners' (New Zealand Education Review Office, 2015), incorporating children with diverse learning needs.

This group is defined as children with "special education needs or special abilities" (New Zealand Education Review Office, 2015). It is argued that the term special needs is indicative of children with disabilities, whereas children with 'special abilities' relates to gifted learners (Macartney & Morton, 2009). This is reinforced where the Education Review Office outlines the definition of special needs promoted by the NZMoE as "a physical disability, a sensory impairment, a learning or communication delay, a social, emotional or behavioural difficulty, or a combination of these" (New Zealand Education Review Office, 2012). When constructed in this way, gifted children are not considered as children with 'special needs', and inclusion within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) according to this definition is challenged. As argued earlier, external labelling and relabeling these groups is an act of hegemony, reinforcing their position as the 'other' and negating opportunities for "authentic dialogue" (p.8). Questions need to be asked what this means, not only for the learners grouped within this bracket within early childhood education and care, but the teachers who are expected to work with these groups of 'priority learners'.

The aspirations for all children, as situated by *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996), is

> *to grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body, and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society. (p. 9)*

Some research into inclusionary practice positions all children as competent (Macartney & Morton, 2009). As pointed out earlier, homogeneous perceptions of children negate opportunities for alternate perceptions. When competence can be defined as "the ability to do something successfully or efficiently" (Oxford Dictionary Online, 2014), competence in all children implies all children will be equally successful at learning, invoking the same problems outlined earlier regarding perceiving all (or no) children as gifted. Additionally it

draws upon the earlier contention that a shared understanding of a concept will aid understandings of the difference between giftedness and talent relative to potential and competence. Within the international context, the issue of inclusion has served to limit educational provision for gifted individuals, as misinterpretations of inclusionary practice equated to all children being placed together within a regular classroom, served by the same curriculum content (Adams, 2009).

**Contesting discourses: Competing conceptualisations of giftedness and the infant and toddler.**

> *I am constituted as a subject across a number of power relations which are exerted over me and which I exert over others. (Foucault, 1988a, p. 39)*

As illustrated in the previous sections, discourses impact upon the power relations between the gifted individual and society, or the infant/toddler, and society. Therefore, as illustrated by Foucault (1988) above, the infant or toddler is constituted as a subject through these power relations. But it is between dominant discourses surrounding infants and toddlers and dominant discourses surrounding giftedness where the gifted infant and toddler are located. The convergence of these discourses constitutes a position where harmonious or juxtapositional discourses align or compete. Teachers participating within the study negotiate these discourses within their exemplary practice with gifted infants and toddlers. It is within this juncture that my inquiry into teachers' exemplary practice is positioned.

If "the constructions of children and childhood in society at any given time demonstrate…the discursive positions that are available for children to experience their lives" (Duncan, 2010, p. 100), then it is the point between discourses of giftedness and the 'infant/toddler' that the gifted infant/toddler resides. When conceptualising the gifted infant or toddler, it is necessary to be aware of the conflict between societal discourses maintaining

and regulating the 'child' (Foucault, 1980b) which are then compounded by the dominant

discourses surrounding giftedness. Dominant discourse obscures power relationships, the

power dynamics upheld through discourse are oblique rather than transparent, and individuals

are oblivious to whom the power serves (MacNaughton, 2005).

Conflicting discursive constructions act and interact upon individual subjectivities

(Duncan, 2010). Distinguishing the discourses underpinning the actions of individuals is a

way to both comprehend and locate the tension between the individual's adherence to

disciplinary regimes and ability to regulate their behaviours (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998a).

According to Keen (2005) approximately one sixth of New Zealand early childhood

education centres felt unable to define giftedness. Within the discipline of giftedness research,

there is the contention that "the familiarity of the word giftedness within our personal lexicon

makes misunderstanding likely" (Ambrose et al., 2010, p. 463). As a result, the way in which

teachers are misguided could be a result of the inconsistency and lack of cohesion within the

domain of gifted education (Ambrose et al., 2010). However, Keen also found some early

childhood providers rejected the definition of giftedness, citing it's incongruity with the

holistic aims of early childhood education. According to the national curriculum document of

Aotearoa New Zealand, *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996)*,* holistic

education "should encompass all dimensions of children's learning and development and

should see the child as a whole" (p.30). The discourse of holistic education discursively

constructs the child as a being who must be considered as a whole, not compartmentalised

into components. The dimensions of learning and development that infants and toddlers who

may be called gifted are exhibiting are a part of their whole being, yet the ascription of the

term gifted is considered circumscribing. Again, questions are raised regarding the discursive

construction of the term gifted, and it's utilisation within Aotearoa New Zealand. Yet, in

considering the theory of Foucault, the following question must be considered: where does

the power in holding these discursive positions lie and for whom does the discourse serve (Foucault, 1980b)?

The teachers' position of privilege as an educational professional, and the power relationships that they engage with daily with the infants and toddlers serve to legitimise the discourses they engage in, and normalise through their pedagogy. For parents who consider their infants or toddlers to be gifted, teacher perception and support is crucial. Parental identification of child giftedness has long been considered to be one of the best methods of accurate assessment within gifted education research (Ciha, Harris, Hoffman, & Potter, 1974). Within Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood education, the position of the NZMoE on giftedness for infants and toddlers is to recommend parents "to talk to their teacher. They can advise you about what to do next and provide contact details of those who can help if more support or information is needed." (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2012b). This serves to further the teacher's position as the 'expert' and legitimise the discourses that underpin their practice. Consequently, early childhood teachers who are unable or unwilling to identify the existence of giftedness would perpetuate these discourses to the parents who believe their child is gifted. Alternately, there could be teachers within a team that are willing to support a concept of gifted children, but are not supported by their team or management. In this situation, issues regarding teachers ability to promote situational change if he or she are unaware of the ways in which he or she is constructed through power relations by discourse remains are pertinent (Dahlberg et al., 2007). Additionally, this situation can be interpreted through the power/knowledge dynamic, by means of the dominant discourses promoted by the institutions involved. Within the New Zealand context, giftedness is not referred to within the New Zealand early childhood curriculum document *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996), despite the prominence it is afforded within the school sector, where the

NZMoE has set up an entire website for giftedness, for children, parents and teachers to utilise, interact and contribute to (www.gifted.tki.org.nz).

Within the political domain, investment into early childhood education (Stephen, 2010) and gifted education is often construed as an investment into the future, as it is argued within the publication *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* that the chief goal of gifted education should be the development of outstanding achievement or eminence (Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius, & Worrell, 2011). The 'future potential human capital' of the infant or toddler who is perceived to have accelerated abilities can be calculated to have great value, which could require high levels of economic monetary input in order to realise this 'potential'. In this way, 'gifted infants' are positioned between two debts. These debts are macroeconomic, national and familial, and with multidirectional effects, as children are positioned between the (financial and affective) debts to and of their parents, but also between national and international development promoting their status as the investments into the future (Burman, 2010). These discourses will also influence the infant and toddlers' emerging subjectivity and impact upon the wider community (Merry, 2004).

In summary, within the negotiation between discourses for giftedness and infants and toddlers, subject positions are made available for these gifted children. It is in this nexus point where gifted infants and toddlers live their lives, which acts upon their developing subjectivity. Teachers' adherence to particular discourses will serve to construct a gifted infant or toddler's education within early childhood centres. The privileged position held by teachers as the educational 'expert' reinforces these discourses to parents and whānau. This is equally reinforced through the marginalisation of giftedness in early childhood education and care through the lack of documents and support provided by the New Zealand government.

# Conclusion

In conclusion, the discursive positioning of giftedness constructs the available subject positions for infants and toddlers to live their lives. The legacy of positivist research is strong within the realm of gifted education, research and theory, yet contemporary consideration of giftedness queries this historic discursive positioning of giftedness, promoting multiplicity in forms of giftedness, including culturally relevant definitions.

The marketisation of early childhood educational provision, promotes investment into early childhood education as investment into 'future potential human capital', yet investment and prominence is not afforded to young children who may be considered 'potentially gifted'. This may be an effect of the egalitarian nature of Aotearoa New Zealand society, identified within Chapter One: Background and context. If there is the perception that gifted children will get ahead in education anyway, why invest when this future potential is assured?

Dominant discourses of giftedness serve to construct subject positions which may not reflect those of the gifted infant or toddler or their family. Dominant discourses that underpin the practices of teachers impact upon the educational experiences and agentic actions of the infant or toddler. These discourses invoke power relationships between the teacher and the infant toddler and their family.

# Chapter Three: Literature Review

## Introduction

This literature review will critically evaluate selected research literature which investigates perceptions of giftedness and gifted education held by teachers, parents, and other wider community members. Research informed by a variety of theoretical paradigms will be reviewed within this chapter as there are few studies investigating perceptions of giftedness and gifted education that employ a Foucauldian perspective. In Chapter One: Background and outline of the Topic, I asserted that policy and practice regarding gifted education within early childhood education and care is significantly different to that designated for school aged children. However consideration of studies including primary school aged children were included as there are very few studies that specifically address the perceptions of giftedness and gifted education for children in early childhood education and care, and much less for infants and toddlers. Consequently, the literature reviewed within this chapter is limited to the perceptions relative to children within the early years. This includes young primary school aged children (5-12 years old) as well as children within early childhood to ensure an appropriate scope of information for the focus of the thesis.

**How the literature was sourced.**

Literature was sourced through the University of Canterbury library and Ebsco search engines. The search terms "gifted", "talented", "high ability", "intelligent" (and derivatives thereof) as well as "early childhood", "preschool" and "kindergarten" were used to source research. Other search engines were also utilised (Scopus, Eric, Psychnet, Google Scholar) to broaden the search. Additional research studies were also gleaned from reading the reference lists of the research studies sourced initially.

**Consideration of the theoretical frames of the research reviewed.**

Paradigmatic framing of research positions research findings according to specific sets of beliefs about knowledge (P. Hughes, 2010). As explicated within Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework, this thesis is framed by Foucauldian theory. There are few investigations into perceptions of individuals regarding giftedness that employ a Foucauldian oeuvre to analyse the data. Many of the studies sourced were positioned within a positivist frame. As explained earlier in this thesis, positivist research into perceptions and attitudes seek out uniformity and regularity within the perceptions, a cause and effect relationship between actions and consequences, categorising and quantifying perceptions into homogeneous groups to develop a 'true' theory of human behaviour. Causality between perceptions of giftedness/gifted education and resultant human behaviour/educational practices are sought in order to develop a unifying theory of how these perceptions can be predicted and altered. Positivist research considers a singular notion of the self, which is impacted upon by direct external actions. There are few studies which are framed within a postmodern paradigm, which queries notions of uniformity, regularity, truth and a single contiguous self. The following review therefore takes into account not only the findings of the data, but a consideration of the positioning of these findings within the framework of the researchers, and how this fits with Foucauldian theory. As much of the information reviewed represents paradigmatic approaches which interpret information very differently from Foucauldian theory, the discursive positioning of 'truth' and 'knowledge' within the studies reviewed are contested by the theoretical frame of this thesis. To make sense of the reviewed literature, findings will be thematically represented, and then these findings will be considered using a Foucauldian lens.

**Presentation of the review.**

Many themes emerged from the reviewed literature. The review will begin with consideration of the research findings of the three studies which employed a Foucauldian analysis of the data. Following this, literature which is grounded in other research paradigms will be discussed. These other research studies will be considered in relation to the theory of Foucault, and re-situated to draw out the discourses and discursive images that dominant the research. The review will be broken down into two overarching areas of research: Foucauldian analyses of giftedness and gifted education; and Literature grounded in other research paradigms.

# Foucauldian Analyses of Giftedness and Gifted education

Only three studies were found which utilised a Foucauldian analysis to investigate the perceptions of individuals regarding giftedness and gifted education. These three studies investigate very different areas of giftedness, Galitis (2009) investigates teachers' perceptions within the primary school context in Australia; in Aotearoa New Zealand adult participants self-perceptions of their twice exceptionality were researched by Wong (2009); and finally perceptions of giftedness within news media in the British context was analysed utilising a Foucauldian lens by O'Connor (2012). Despite these disparate domains and contexts, common discourses and discursive images of gifted children were identified by the researchers and will be reviewed below.

**Dominant discursive images of giftedness and the gifted child.**

Galitis's (2009) research sought to investigate discourses of giftedness and intelligence within the professional knowledge and views of teachers within a primary school in Melbourne,

Australia. These teachers had undergone professional development in gifted education 4 years prior to the study; consequently the research investigated how discourses of giftedness promoted within the professional development challenged dominant discourses within the school. Galitis (2009) found that teacher perceptions remained entrenched despite this professional development. Historic dominant discursive images of the gifted child as intellectual, fast at learning and high achieving still dominated teacher perceptions and practices within the primary school. Galitis (2009) identifies the contemporary Australian construction of giftedness to have originated from American research conducted within the psychological domain, informing an academic/intelligence based image of the gifted child. Research conducted by O'Connor (2012) also identifies a dominant discursive image of the intellectual gifted child. O'Connor (2012) engaged in discourse analysis to analyse the image of the gifted child constructed within news media, and found the majority of stories to be about the academically gifted child, which was depicted as "a passive pawn of adult manipulation" (p. 297). This is supported by Galitis's (2009) research which found some teachers also espoused an image of a 'hothoused' child who is manipulated into exceptional performance and "bulldozed by parents" (p. 185).

Within news media in the United Kingdom, O'Connor (2012) finds that intellectually gifted children are depicted as deviant in relation to a dominant normalised image of the child. This dominant image compartmentalises children to fit within normative cognitive ages and stages, deviation from these norms are viewed as an aberration. O'Connor (2013) asserts that dominant discursive images of 'childhood' positioned the behaviour of the academically gifted child as "strange…(and)…oddly different" (p. 298). Other discursive images of the gifted child were relative to their domain of giftedness, as O'Connor asserts "If stories about sporting prodigies are characterised by admiration, and stories about musical prodigies are characterised by awe, then stories about academic prodigies could best be described as being

characterised by pity" (p. 301). This finding is corroborated by Galitis's (2009) research. The dominant discursive image of the academically gifted child influenced the teachers' example of a gifted child, as all the teachers in the study referred to a single child (who exhibited academic giftedness) as *the* example, within a school of 580 children. The promotion of this dominant intellectual discursive image of the gifted child also invoked an image of the gifted child's behaviour as deviant to a 'norm'. The teachers vocalised their normative perceptions when discussing how accelerated gifted children have "missed out on some of the social and 'being kids things'" (Galitis, 2009, p. 193). These images of the gifted child reinforced dominant discourses instead of the discursive images promoted within their professional development.

Dominant discursive images are explored by Wong (2009) who explored the contesting discursive positioning of individuals who were both gifted and medically diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome. Although the participants are adults, this study has been considered within this review as Wong (2009) utilised a Foucauldian analysis to investigate the discourses that inform the participants' perspectives regarding their positon as a "social paradox" (p. 3) between giftedness and disability. Wong (2009) investigated four adult individuals utilising semi-structured interviews to glean qualitative data. A dominant medical/scientific discourse informed dominant images of people with Asperger's. This discourse informed an image of the person with Asperger's as 'disabled', an image contested by dominant discursive images of the gifted individual as the construction of Asperger's as a 'disability' contests discursive images of the gifted individual as having 'high ability'. Wong (2009) contests that the normative positioning of a person with Asperger's syndrome, as impaired/disabled contests the discursive image of the gifted subject as being a dualistic "'opposite'…on a learning ability spectrum" (p. 3). The negotiation between a gifted subject position, and a 'disabled' subject position converged in the dominant image of both these

groups as different from the norm. Discursive images of individuals with Asperger's as "strange and eccentric" (Wong, 2009, p. 130) aligns with discursive images of the academic gifted child as 'abnormal' in research by O'Connor (2013) and Galitis (2009). Within Wong's study, some participants perceived their exceptional abilities to be part of their Asperger's condition, some of the participants considered their areas of giftedness to be 'normalised' within their social groupings, and were surprised they were considered gifted abilities within the wider society. To them and their families, some of which also shared the same condition and gifts, their abilities were considered normal behaviours. Participants only considered their 'gift' as effective if it aided their integration and acceptance within society as a person with Asperger's. According to Wong (2009) "the bench-mark for measuring giftedness by the participants tended to be how well someone was "accepted and accommodated within regular society" (p. 150). Societal acknowledgement for their 'gift' served as a form of validation for their 'disability'. According to the participants, only certain gifts were recognised as they were considered valuable by the society. Further probing of the discursive image of individuals with Asperger's as inherently being gifted as part of their condition need to be further explored, especially in relation to their 'acceptance' within society. O'Connor (2013), asserts that news media positions sporting and musical giftedness positively, whereas academic giftedness is positioned as an aberration. It would be valuable to investigate the normalisation of gifted ability within the discursive image of an individual with Asperger's. However, tensions regarding the levels of support given to 'disabled' individuals compared with gifted individuals converged in this study. The dominant discursive image of giftedness and gifted education as 'elitist' asserted by Galitis (2009) is contested within the egalitarian discursive image of the 'disabled' individual as deserving of support to ensure equal outcomes in their education.

Within Galitis (2009) findings, gendered images of gifted individuals affected identification and practices. Girls were only nominated by teachers to the gifted programme in order to ensure a gender balance was maintained. Gendered concepts of giftedness – boys are good at maths, girls are good at languages – were maintained. These normalised images affected identification of gifted girls and boys outside of their designated domains of giftedness. Girls were expected to achieve in the arts domains (languages, literacy) and boys would need intervention, yet no interventions would be provided for girls to excel at traditional intellectual domains (mathematics, sciences), as their success in the arts was deemed a sufficient measure of overall success. O'Connor (2013) also investigates a gender discourse within news media stories of gifted individuals. Within the 13 cases of children demonstrating high sporting ability, only two were about girls. O'Connor argues that while a gender discourse is promoted through this underrepresentation of gifted sporting girls, machismo is also promoted over academic giftedness. The discursive image of sporting success is defined in "stereotypically masculine terms of effort, hard work and perseverance, rather than being attributed to the efforts of others (such as 'pushy parents') or some sort of social deviance on the part of the child" (p. 300) promote this image as being more valued and valuable than images of academically gifted children. Here the gender and historic intelligence discourses converge to promote not only a socially accepted view of physical giftedness, but of a *male* physically gifted child.

**A gifted label.**

As stated above, Galitis (2009) found that teacher perceptions remained entrenched despite the professional development undertaken four years prior to her research. The teachers' perceptions of giftedness were informed by historic dominant discursive images of the intellectual gifted child, a child who can grasp ideas quickly, who achieves well in class and

is 'sparky'. Some teachers queried the existence of giftedness, contending that all children could be considered gifted. Resistance to the programme was enacted by these teachers by rotating children within the programme so all children can participate, promulgating an egalitarian view of ability. Giftedness is perceived as a label, value-laden with "a lot of…emotional connotations" (Galitis, 2009, p. 202). Galitis contends "[a]s a social construct, the word "gifted" is value laden" (Galitis, 2009, p. 254). In response to the view of the 'label' of giftedness, participants within the study displaced gifted for the term 'capable'. In justifying their contentions of giftedness as an actuality, the teachers asserted there is no certainty children will continue to be gifted therefore it is neither necessary nor appropriate to label these children as gifted.

The perception that the term gifted has a labelling effect is supported by Wong's (2009) study, but in a slightly different manner than other studies. The participants perceived 'Asperger's' to be a label in which "they felt they were often viewed at first glance as belonging to a group of 'disabled or impaired people' and secondly as individuals" (p. 127). In order to combat the 'disabled' label associated with their designation as a person with Asperger's, the participants adopted a 'gifted' label to promote a view which positioned them as both able and capable. However the adoption of this subject position was challenged due to the dominance of the medical discourse (and subsequent 'disabled' view of an individual with Asperger's) in society. Negotiation of medical discourses which compartmentalised the individual with Asperger's, with a rights discourse in order to reject the negative effects of an Asperger's label created tensions for the individuals who wished to project a view of themselves as able and in some cases gifted. Wong (2009) problematises the 'rights' discourse within the Foucauldian frame, as a rights discourse predominately positions power within a didactic relationship between the autocratic suppressor and coerced subjects, seeking to empower disenfranchised individuals through supplication to a legal system. Wong (2009)

contends according to Foucault, power is not located externally but internally, rendering the notion of 'empowerment' as defunct.

## Literature Grounded in Other Research Paradigms

Modernist notions of teacher competency and exemplary practice for gifted individuals are fixed and universal. Research set within modernist paradigms explores ways of quantifying and explaining teacher perceptions, in some studies seeking to influence perception through interventions. Positivist research into perceptions of individuals construct static constructs of correct practice. Positive and negative perceptions, invoked through the construction of an exemplary teacher or enactor of gifted practice, promote discursive images without explorations of the discourses that inform these images, nor the specific social setting of these discursive images. The power relationships inherent within these discursive images and the potential for invoking further power relationships by promoting these images within other contexts is not considered. Post-modernist research studies reflected interpretations of shifting subjectivities, and discursive language and practices which inform teacher perceptions. Research which reflects postmodernist or Foucauldian concerns seek to view the perception as a construct, localised and inextricable from the social setting.

Several studies were sourced which investigate the perceptions of individuals who work with gifted children. Some of these studies utilise their findings to instigate an intervention in order to alter these perceptions. As this thesis is concerned with perceptions regarding giftedness and gifted education, all studies which investigated the participants perceptions were considered for review. When the findings were considered in light of the Foucauldian framework of this study, the findings of the research reviewed uncovered the following major themes: Dominant discursive images of giftedness and the gifted child; A gifted label;

Contesting discursive images; Promoting alternate discourse; Negotiating alternative subject positions within dominant discourse; Problems with governmentality of gifted education; Discursive images of the 'expert'; A 'special needs' discourse.

**Dominant discursive images of giftedness and the gifted child.**

Two research studies concerned with perceptions of giftedness in early childhood education within the Aotearoa New Zealand have been conducted. Keen (2005), investigated issues surrounding giftedness for sixty-eight education providers within the Otago, Southland and Bay of Plenty areas, including twenty-one early childhood centres. More recently, Margrain and Farquhar (2011, 2012) conducted a survey of perceptions of gifted education, advertised upon the ChildForum and giftEDnz websites (professional organisations for early years teachers and teachers supportive of gifted education respectively) and available for anyone to respond to. While Keen's (2005) participants represent teachers in education, half of the respondents to Margrain and Farquhar's (2011, 2012) were parents, and a fifth of the respondents were teachers. Keen (2005) reports that one-sixth of early childhood providers were "unable" (p. 209) to define giftedness, and a minority of early childhood teachers rejected the notion of giftedness on the grounds that giftedness is a label which compartmentalises children. Margrain and Farquhar (2012, 2012) found that the majority of respondents supported identification of children as gifted, and the five percent of respondents who suggested children should not be identified cited an adversity to formalised methods of assessment as the cause for their rejection of identification. The two results show a discrepancy between the perspectives of early childhood educators and parents.

There are questions regarding the discourses which underpin the perspectives of the parents and the teachers that should be addressed to investigate the power/knowledge

relationship between parents and teachers. Within both studies, teacher attitudes towards giftedness were considered important. Within Keen's study, parents of children involved in gifted education programmes, including programmes within the early childhood setting, were asked to share their perspectives. Keen (2005) finds parents esteem the attitudes of the teacher toward their child's gifted ability as more valuable than the teachers' academic qualifications. However in Margrain and Farquhar's (2012) study, respondents perceived teachers as ignoring or dismissing gifted behaviours, arguing that teachers are more likely to focus upon socialisation and play, avoiding the child's exceptionality. Keen (2005) concluded that parents perceived teacher education in gifted education as crucial in developing positive attitudes and skills to further their child's education. Participants in Margrain and Farquhar's (2011, 2012) study also recognised that teachers needed more professional development to cater appropriately to gifted learners, but identified that there were few resources in place to support this development. The expertise of the teachers of gifted children, identified in these two surveys as further formal education opportunities, will be investigated further in the subsection: Discursive images of the 'expert'.

Within Keen's (2005) study, less than half of the parents felt they were well informed on how the early childhood setting was providing for the gifted child's education, and more than a fifth wished their child was identified earlier in their education. Margrain and Farquhar's (2012) also contend that parents considered the early childhood education setting to be under stimulating, with rare opportunities for extension made available to the children.

Within the North American context, Miller (2009), Schroth and Helfer (2009) and Sankar-DeLeeuw (1999) investigate perceptions of giftedness which are informed by dominant discourses of giftedness. Sankar-DeLeeuw's (1999) participants included parents and early childhood teachers in Canada. Participants in Miller's (2009) study were teachers within schools, whereas participants in Schroth and Helfer (2009) included gifted education

specialists as well as school teachers and administrators. Both Sankar-DeLeeuw (1999) and Schroth and Helfer (2009) conducted surveys questioning the respondent or querying their level of agreement with statements regarding gifted learners, whereas respondents in Miller's (2009) study were asked to create a graphic representation of their theory of giftedness based upon a set of characteristics cards supplied by the researchers; the respondents could choose which cards to include and which to discard. Participants within all the studies demonstrated a high level of variability in their perceptions of giftedness. Sankar-DeLeeuw (1999) found almost three quarters of the parents surveyed were found to support early identification of gifted youngsters, akin to Keen's (2005) finding that over 20% of parents wished their child was identified earlier. Yet half the teachers in Sankar-DeLeeuw's (1999) study did not agree with early identification. Again, almost three quarters of parents believed gifted children required a different curriculum, whereas less than a third of teachers agreed curriculum differentiation was necessary to extend gifted youngsters. Parents and teachers were in agreement that cognitive ability and socio-emotional development were crucial to assess in the case of early entry, yet less than a tenth of teachers supported early entry to school. Within Millar's (2009) study, one respondent utilised all cards in their construction of giftedness whereas another used only one card; many of the respondents found it difficult to imagine a gifted child without creativity, a broad knowledge base and vocabulary, but found it easier to imagine a gifted child lacking in social/intra personal skills invoking the image of the gifted child as socially inept. Schroth and Helfer (2009) found that the respondents were accepting of virtually all definitions of giftedness offered, which included concepts by Renzulli, Sternberg, and Gardner. While results within the 98th percentile from standardised tests were also acceptable as a concept of giftedness, only half agreed that this defined giftedness, demonstrating tension between historic dominant images of the gifted child constructed through scientific discourse and alternate images of gifted expression.

Interestingly, the researchers determined a hierarchical of gifted abilities which related to their perceptions of the financial support these areas should receive within schools. More respondents valued analytical, critical thinkers, intellectual ability and specific academic aptitude contending these groups should receive funding support, in comparison to gifts within visual and performing arts. The researchers contend this funding hierarchy is reflected in current funding of gifted programmes. Only Sankar-DeLeeuw (1999) collected qualitative data from the participants, yet the majority of the reported findings reflect a quantitative approach to the data. Whereas Miller (2009), and Schroth and Helfer (2009) only collected quantitative data.

The interesting findings from the data cannot be investigated further as respondents could not reply with their own perspectives on their choices. It would be interesting to explore the power/knowledge relationship in relation to the hierarchy of the domains of giftedness, and further investigate the power relationships between the teachers and parents.

**A gifted 'label'.**

The gifted 'label' was investigated by Chellpalan (2012), and Matthews, Ritchotte, and Jolly (2014). Both studies investigated the perceptions of parents of gifted children, specifically their perceptions of discussing their child's giftedness with others. Chellapan's (2012) phenomenological research within the Aotearoa New Zealand context investigated the perceptions of four couples with intellectually gifted children. Within Matthews, Ritchotte, and Jolly's (2014) American study, 105 parents participated in a national online survey to participate, but no comment is made upon the children's areas of giftedness.

Within both the American and Aotearoa New Zealand studies, parents were fearful of the reactions they would receive from others when they discussed their child's giftedness. Within Chellapan's (2012) study, one parent states "if you go out there in our society in New

Zealand and say you have a gifted child, people will look at you like who do you think you are? You know people would judge you immediately when you say your child is gifted" (p. 135). Matthews, Ritchotte, and Jolly (2014) also find that parents will avoid discussing their child's giftedness with others. One parent comments "I was hurt, you know, put down by [other] parents … [for] things my elder daughter did…I learned quickly, that they could brag about their kids but I wasn't allowed to brag about mine" (p. 386). Tensions between sharing information about their gifted child and 'bragging' is also central in Chellapan's (2013) study as it is entitled *"If you talk you are just talking, if I talk is that bragging?"*. This statement is taken from one of the parents and sums up their perspectives in sharing information about their gifted child. A dominant discourse of the 'pushy' parent who incessantly promoted the interests of their gifted child is invoked. This image affects the attempts of the parent to discuss their gifted child as others view this discussions as 'bragging', and either disparage the parents and children or demonstrate apathy to the parents' comments or rationalisation of their child's gifts in light of other's abilities in domains where the child was less developed. Keen (2005) also finds some parents alluded to the apathy of teachers regarding their child's giftedness. Teachers demonstrated apathy or dismissed of the child's abilities. Keen (2005) argues these reactions are an effect of the "'tall poppy' syndrome in New Zealand education" (p. 209). The 'tall poppy' syndrome is a colloquial term for the levelling or undermining response some individuals have to people identified as high achievers within the community. These high achievers are considered to too far reaching, and their abilities are sometimes valued, but belittled at the same time. As outlined within O'Connor's (2012) study, the level of respect and value is connected to the domain of gifted ability; high achievers in particular sports or music are respected and valued, but not high cognitive achievers. Tapper's (2014) doctoral thesis upon the experiences of gifted and talented adolescents within schools in

Aotearoa New Zealand, also identifies the 'tall poppy' syndrome within school culture as a means of disparaging high achievers rather than praising them.

Like Chellapan's (2013) and Matthews, Ritchotte, and Jolly's (2014) studies, Tapper (2014) finds that parents are reluctant to share stories of their child's giftedness with their friends. The parents in Tapper's (2014) study demonstrate conscious awareness of the impact of a 'gifted' label. Research by Newton (2009) which investigated the perceptions of primary school teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand also identified a negative gifted 'label' which caused hesitance by teachers in their usage of the term with the parents of gifted children. In Tapper's (2014) study one parent rejects the label gifted, and others parents displace the gifted label, preferring to call their child 'bright'. Tapper (2014) argues the term 'bright' is more conventional, a more common societal discourse relating to giftedness.

While parents in Tapper's (2014) study argued they experienced the negative effects of a 'gifted' label from others in society, primary school teachers in Newton's (2009) Aotearoa New Zealand study avoided the usage of the term gifted because they sought to avoid the negative effects from applying the gifted label because it affected the parents interactions with their child. These teachers contended that parental expectations of children labelled gifted would negatively affect the experiences of the child, as parents would place pressure upon the child to maintain high levels of achievement relative to the expectations a gifted label ascribes. These teachers rejected the use of the gifted label. It is interesting that the rejection of the gifted label is considered the appropriate action due to the negative effects of 'others' in society, yet the 'other' and the perceived negative effects are is constructed differently by teachers compared to parents. Given these findings, a discourse analysis which investigates the power/knowledge effects between parents and teachers based upon these disparate, yet also converging perceptions of the gifted 'label' would be of value.

Within the Czech Republic, Mudrak (2011) also investigates the negotiation and implications of a gifted 'label' in relation to the nurturing practices employed by 5 sets of parents of gifted children across a variety of gifted domains (cognitive, athletic, musical). 4 of the 5 sets of parents referred to their child as gifted. Mudrak's (2011) findings contend that the gifted label affects the parental nurturing practices, which impacted upon the child's emotional and motivational development. Mudrak (2011) asserts that the employment of a gifted label and the associated images of gifted children affected parental interpretation of their child's behaviours and resulted in parental interactions that negatively affected children's emotions and motivational development. Images of the child as a product of their hereditary/genetics and as a being of future potential dominated parental perceptions, and influenced parental interventions with some parents refusing to 'limit' their child's behaviours as their child was 'predesigned' to learn independently.

Mudrak (2011) concludes that the one parent who did not promote their child produced parental nurturing practices which enabled this child to have "developed his giftedness most successfully and was the only one who did not experience difficulties with motivation or social adaptation" (p. 213). Mudrak's (2011) research would appear to corroborate the perceptions of the teachers in Newton's (2009) research who were reluctant to use the gifted 'label' as it will negatively affect parents' behaviours. However, there are questions arising from the researchers' engagement with dominant discursive images of the 'successful' child, the construction of the gifted child as emotionally disturbed, and the image of the 'pushy' parent of the gifted child. The study investigates the social construction of 'giftedness' employed by the parents, but it is unclear whether the social construction of 'giftedness' is problematised by the researcher. Mudrak's (2011) findings are further brought into question when compared to Freeman's research (2013). In this long term investigation into giftedness, Freeman (2013) contends that individuals labelled gifted were more likely to be considered

by other members of society to have emotional difficulties in connection with their gifted 'label', whether they expressed these behaviours or not. The preconception of the individual according to their designation as 'gifted' is discriminatory.

Mudrak (2011) lists 'problems' for the children who are labelled gifted, and asserts that the one child who is not labelled gifted has "No problems except small fluctuations in school results due to musical preparation". There are questions regarding the researcher's perceptions and the construction of a discursive image of the gifted child in relation to their social and emotional behaviours.

**Contesting discursive images.**

Dominant discursive images of gifted individuals inform the discursive practices enacted for and by these individuals and others within society. Lassig (2009), Matthews, Ritchotte, and Jolly (2014), Freeman(2013), Chellapan (2012) and Needham (2010) all identify problems with giftedness which can be interpreted as contesting discursive images when viewed through a Foucauldian lens.

Needham (2010) employed a phenomenological analysis to investigate the perceptions of primary school teachers on the social and emotional development of gifted children in Aotearoa New Zealand. Lassig (2009) investigated the attitudes of primary school teachers in Australia, and as described earlier, Matthews, Ritchotte, and Jolly (2014) investigated a wide variety of perceptions in the American context. Perceptions of appropriate pedagogical practice in all these contexts were informed by a Piagetian developmental discourse. Participants contested opportunities for acceleration as they contended that children should be with children their own age. Conversely, Harrison's (2003) research in the Australian early childhood context contests developmental discourse. Harrison (2003) identifies tensions between a developmental discourse which situates children according to age based peers, and

the identification of children as gifted, contending that a theory of 'developmentally appropriate practice' creates a 'glass ceiling' which limits teachers' perceptions of the abilities and possibilities of the young children they teach. Teachers' 'developmentally appropriate practice' is limited to age/stage interpretations of behaviours and ability. Gifted children who excel beyond their age peers are limited, frustrated and in some cases deterred from learning. This echoes the findings of Galitis (2009) who argued that the participants who viewed the gifted child as abnormal sought to normalise them through traditional 'childhood' experiences with their age peers.

Contesting discursive images also affected the interpretation of gifted children's social and emotional development. Teachers in Needham's (2010) study expressed uncertainty whether gifted children exhibited social and emotional problems, yet the majority of teachers agreed that gifted children have trouble relating to age peers, and are easily frustrated. These perceptions are also informed through developmental discourse, as gifted children are expected to relate to age peers rather than 'ability' peers or friends outside of their age group. Research by Grant (2013) within the Australian context which explored parental perceptions of gifted children's transitions from the early childhood to school environments also found that teachers focussed upon what they perceived to be lacking in the child's development. Neither the parental aspirations, nor the preferences of the child were considered by teachers, whose vision of appropriate development was limited to normative developmental views.

Echoing the uncertainty expressed by teachers within Needham's (2010) study, research by Lassig (2009) into the attitudes of primary school teachers in Australia questions teachers ability to accurately perceive gifted children's emotional and social experiences due to the homogeneous perception of the gifted child. In Lassig's (2009) study, rather than perceiving gifted children as 'emotionally disturbed', questions are posed regarding the ability of the teachers to accurately conceive gifted children as having negative social experiences, arguing

teachers are unaware of the "isolation and rejection" (p. 39) faced by gifted children. Lassig (2009) asserts that these teachers perceptions are affected by perceptions of the gifted child as "popular, friendly, well-behaved, and conforming" (p. 39) limiting opportunities for alternate subject positions. McAllum, (2010) and Geake and Gross (2008) contest this 'conforming' view of the gifted child. Geake and Gross (2008) investigated English, Scottish and Australian teachers' beliefs about gifted education, found that teachers were held feelings of disaffection towards gifted students and a belief that high intelligence was linked with social non-compliance. These teachers assumed the gifted child will not fit in socially with their cognitive peers if they were accelerated within the school. McAllum (2010) conducted case studies of hidden gifted learners (aged between nine years and twelve years old) within Aotearoa New Zealand revealing a teacher who identified a child's sensitivity as an form of expression of his gifted ability, and conveyed that this sensitivity was accommodated, but it would be preferable for the child to adjust this behaviour and 'fit in'. Another teacher identified a gifted child's inability to make friends as of primary concern as it was perceived to be impacting upon his learning. Yet another teacher focussed upon the negative aspects of the gifted child's interactions with peers. These discursive images of the gifted child as 'needy' and 'hypersensitive' contest images of the gifted child as 'conforming' and 'popular'. Contesting images of the 'conforming, high achieving' gifted child and the 'emotionally disturbed' gifted child dominant research. When considered by the gifted individual themselves within Freeman's (2013) study, expressions of emotion which the gifted individuals considered to be connected to other situational circumstances experienced by all people, such as family life and parental behaviour were negatively associated by others to be resultant of their 'giftedness'. Freeman (2013) argues the assumption that intellectually gifted individuals have more emotional problems is a societal construction, and argues positioning children in this stereotype "not only raises teachers' and parents' expectations of emotional

disturbance in gifted children [but that] young children may even adapt to this expectation" (p. 12). In this way, the discourse normalises gifted children's behaviour to fit societal perceptions and expectations, reifying the discourse.

Bevan-Brown (2002) draws attention to the differences in construction and meaning for gifted learners in the English and te reo Māori language setting. Bevan-Brown (2002) asserts that English can be more interpretive, whereas te reo Māori is more direct. She asserts that bilingual children struggle with this difference. Implications for identification of giftedness can result when children are uncertain what exactly is meant when a teacher speaks. The Māori gifted child's attempts to interpret the question appropriately and the necessity for some gifted individuals to be correct before answering could result in teachers misinterpreting hesitation as incomprehension and label the child as 'slow'.


**Promoting alternate discourse.**

Within Hudson, Hudson, Lewis and Watters's (2010) Australian study, the researchers intended to expose the teachers to gifted children within a structured exclusive gifted education programme to contest their existing perceptions of giftedness and gifted education. Also within the Australian context, Plunkett and Kronborg (2011) conducted a study of the perceptions of 300 student teachers' perceptions regarding giftedness and gifted education before and after an elective course of gifted education within their teacher education programmes. Plunkett and Kronborg (2011) assert the "importance of examining opinions and challenging misconceptions" (p. 31), illustrating their enthusiasm to promote an alternate view. Both studies findings relied upon the participants' self-reporting within a questionnaire following the intervention.

The participants in both studies considered their perceptions of giftedness and gifted education to have altered to fit the views promoted through the intervention. Within Plunkett

and Kronborg's (2011) study, participants considered their previous opinions to be "misinformed" (p. 42) and "oblivious" (p. 43). Within Hudson, Hudson, Lewis and Watters's (2010) study, the participants perceived their abilities to teach gifted children improved from involvement in this programme. When viewed through a Foucauldian frame, promotion of an alternate view enables the participants to employ an alternate discourse, promoting a gifted discourse for their later practice. However, within both studies, the participants' ability to engage in a gifted discourse was considered sufficient evidence of a change in perception. The researchers did not consider the possibility that participants' may negotiate multiple subject positions, some supportive of gifted education, and some not dependent on the contextual setting; that their subject position as a 'student' may not reflect their subject position as a 'teacher'. Additionally as the findings in both studies were based upon participants self-reporting and no consideration was made to assess parent's or children's perceptions as to whether children's learning was improved during the participants' sessions. These findings are challenged by research by Garn, Matthews and Jolly (2010). Garn, Matthews and Jolly's (2010) American study into parental perceptions of giftedness found teachers' expectations of their gifted children to be low in relation to parental expectations of the children's abilities. Participants within Hudson, Hudson, Lewis and Watters's (2010) study could be self-reporting a higher level of 'success' than what the parents and children are experiencing. Although the teacher's interpreted their actions as exemplary gifted education practice, parents and children may hold alternate views.

Both of these findings are also contested by Galitis (2009) whose discourse analysis of teachers' approaches to giftedness following such an intervention found "participation in mandated "gifted" professional learning does not automatically translate into efficacious classroom or school practices" (p. 219). As outlined earlier, Galitis's (2009) study identified historic and entrenched discursive images of giftedness remained despite professional

learning which promoted alternate discourse. Although the participants in both Hudson, Hudson, Lewis and Watters (2010) and Plunkett and Kronborg's (2011) studies reported changes in their perceptions, there is no certainty that these changes will be ongoing.

**Negotiating alternate subject positions within dominant discourse.**

Hurford (2013) and Bush (2011) within Aotearoa New Zealand, and Garvis and Prendergast (2011) within Australia, identify their participants as feeling isolated in their experience as a teacher of gifted children. Hurford (2013) investigated 6 Aotearoa New Zealand primary school gifted education programme leaders' perceptions of their roles. Hurford (2013) utilised an interpretive paradigm which promotes a single 'individual reality', and searches for the social rules, symbols and signs for interpreting this reality (Grbich, 2013; P. Hughes, 2010). Within Bush's (2011) study, principals of regional schools were involved in a cluster group intended to bring them together to share experiences and ideas on gifted education practices. Garvis and Prendergast (2011) investigated the experiences of an early childhood teacher who was employed as the leader within a primary school gifted and talented enrichment programme for children aged five to seven years old.

Participants in Hurford's (2013) and Garvis and Prendergast's (2011) studies were leading gifted education programmes within school settings, and experienced a sense of isolation as they considered themselves the only teacher conversant on gifted education, and supportive of the special interests of gifted children. The teacher within Garvis and Prendergast's (2011) study argues for a combined vision for gifted education within the school in order to share responsibility for the gifted learners, rather than compartmentalising their education between the general classroom and the gifted classroom. Hurford (2013) explains that the gifted education teachers were frustrated that the other teachers did not view their class in the same way as themselves, and describe examples of teachers recommending

compliant high-achieving children to the gifted programme, or encouraging all children to have a 'turn' within the class. Allowing all children to have a 'turn' is also identified within Galitis's (2009) study as one participant writes "'we tend to let all prep children have a turn for the first two terms'" (p. 186). Within Galitis's (2009) study, teachers who enabled all children to participate in the gifted programme promoted a discursive image in which 'all children are gifted', informed by egalitarian discourse in promoting equal opportunities for all.

Participants within Bush's (2011) study referred to their isolation within the school in contrast to the unity and collegiality they experienced within the cluster group. Gathering with 'like-minded' others who promoted a gifted discourse resulted in the participants expressing a high level of positivity in the experience. Connecting with others who shared the same perceptions regarding giftedness generated a sense of pleasure. The participants considered this involvement to effect improvements upon their practices with gifted children.

It is possible the feelings of isolation within these studies could be connected to the discursive images of the gifted child held by the participants in relation to dominant discourses within their community. A Foucauldian discourse analysis could outline the dominant discourses, and interrogate the power relationships inherent within the discursive images being promoted.

Garn, Matthews and Jolly (2010), Schroth and Helfer (2008), and Newton (2009) investigate perceptions regarding the preferred strategies in the identification and motivation of gifted children. Garn, Matthews and Jolly (2010) investigate parental perceptions, whereas Schroth and Helfer (2008) and Newton (2009) investigate perceptions held by primary school teachers. Where Garn, Matthews and Jolly's (2010) American study into parental perceptions of giftedness found consistencies between the perceptions of the strategies used to motivate their child, and the actions undertaken by the parents. Schroth and Helfer's American study

(2008), and Newton's Aotearoa New Zealand study (2009) also found discrepancies between teachers perceptions and their identification practices.

Garn, Matthews and Jolly (2010) investigated American parent's perceptions of giftedness in relation to Self-Determination theory (which they describe divides actions into three distinct categories: actions based on intrinsic motivation, actions based on extrinsic motivation, and a-motivational actions in which there is no perceived value to action, so no action is taken). These researchers correlated parents' actions with their gifted child, and the perceived measure of the success of these actions upon their child's motivation to learn. The researchers relate children's actions to parental actions, inferring modernist concepts of human behaviour and behaviour modification theories. However, the researchers also queried the power relationships between parents and teachers, as parent's perceived themselves as 'experts' in relation to teacher their child's abilities. This finding that is supported by Grant (2013). Within the Australian context, Grant (2013) conducted an investigation into the transitions between school and early childhood finding that despite strong communication between teachers and parents, the teachers' assessments of the children's abilities were neither reflective of parental experiences of their children's abilities, nor the child's expression of abilities within the home environment. Also within the Australian context, Hodge and Kemp's (2006) study on identification of young gifted children in Australia questions the relationship between parental nomination and teacher observation of giftedness, asserting that parental recommendation was undervalued in situations where there was teacher distrust of the parent, causing the child's ability to be underestimated. Investigation into the discourses which inform the teachers and parent's perceptions could expose the power relationships being negotiated.

Garn, Matthews and Jolly (2010) argued that the displacement of the 'expert' positioning of the teacher "deemphasized teacher authority and the adequacy of the schooling

environment in favor of parental oversight and control" (p. 267). Parent actions were prioritised over teacher actions, as parental perceptions of their motivational practices were considered to have a more positive effect upon gifted children.

Schroth and Helfer (2008) and Newton (2009) determine there are inconsistencies between preferred methods of identification, and the methods undertaken by the teachers to identify gifted children. While Schroth and Helfer (2008) collected data through a fixed response questionnaire, Newton's (2009) qualitative data enables a more deep engagement with these inconsistencies, enabling Newton to develop theories regarding their manifestation. Schroth and Helfer determine there are inconsistencies between preferred methods of identification, as teacher nominations are preferred, but teacher methods of identifying students include structured observations and test scores. However the quantitative fixed response design of the questionnaire, using a Likert scale to determine levels of agreement to certain statements, could have interpreted complexity in the findings as inconsistencies. Qualitative data from the respondents could enable these complexities to be investigated further.

Keen (2005) ascertains inconsistencies between identification procedures between teachers within the early childhood context. Keen (2005) finds that even when there is agreement on the definition of giftedness procedures for identification differ significantly, and the level of giftedness in order to be identified as gifted was highly variable. Newton (2009) engages in qualitative research, utilising constant comparison analysis, to investigate the perceptions of three focus groups from selected primary schools within Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. Within Newton's (2009) study, participants identification procedures drew upon a variety of formal information gathering procedures, however Newton asserts that all participants maintained that "gut instinct" (p. 70) was their primary indicator for identifying gifted children. Intuition as a tool for identification is difficult to substantiate, and

would be difficult to blend within a political economy which values measurement and accountability. Galitis (2009) argues that accountability within education and surveillance of the education setting through standardised testing, maintains the disciplinary regime of the state within education. Indicators which cannot be measured would limit the disciplinary effectiveness of the state.

**Problems with governmentality of gifted education.**

Hurford (2013), Newton (2009) and Bush (2011)'s Aotearoa New Zealand studies all found that their participants were concerned with governance of gifted education within their educational settings. In these studies, participants queried the level of governmental funding that was provided for gifted education practices. The principals of rural schools in Bush's Aotearoa New Zealand (2011) study argued that funding was especially disproportionate when compared to funding and support for 'disabled' students. Galitis (2009) also argued the dominant egalitarian discourses within Australian society positions gifted education programmes as 'elitist' and therefore governmental assistance would unfairly advantage an already advantaged group. The egalitarian discourse has been identified as prevalent within Aotearoa New Zealand concepts of giftedness, as has the perception that gifted individuals are 'advantaged'. The principles in Bush's (2011) study may be rejecting the egalitarian discourse by contesting the disproportionate levels of funding between gifted individuals and 'disabled' individuals

Governance of teacher education programmes within Aotearoa New Zealand, specifically the lack of professional development opportunities in gifted education were identified as having a negative impact for gifted education practices in Newton's (2009) and Needham's (2010) Aotearoa New Zealand studies of primary school teachers. Within these studies it is argued that a lack of professional development opportunities in gifted education

sustain and possibly even promote misunderstandings and ignorance. Within Needham's (2010) study, primary school teachers' perspectives of the social and emotional needs of the gifted child are investigated. Needham (2010) found that many participants agreed with the statement "Teachers need professional development in gifted and talented education" (Needham, 2010, p. 92). However it is not clear that any professional development in gifted education will improve understanding of giftedness. Within Newton's (2009) study, participants who did receive professional development in gifted education argued this experience left them hesitant on articulating a clear definition of giftedness. The disparate and fractious field of gifted education research may be unsettling teachers who are looking for an 'answer' to their gifted education practice. Governmental direction is called for to improve teachers' expertise.

**Discursive images of the 'expert'.**

In considering the expertise of the teacher it is also important to consider the discursive images of the 'expert' within the studies. Questions arose from many studies considering the designation of expert status in the education of the gifted child. The relationship between expertise and a professional teaching qualification or professional development in gifted education was interrogated by Lassig (2009), Needham (2010) Hudson, Hudson, Lewis and Watters's (2010).

Professional development in gifted education was considered beneficial in raising the expertise of teachers. Needham's (2010) investigation within the Aotearoa New Zealand context finds that primary school teachers who had undergone professional development in giftedness were more likely to promote a positive giftedness discourse, extending their expertise in gifted education practices. Echoing this, within the Australian context, primary school teachers who had undergone a professional development course in gifted education in

Hudson, Hudson, Lewis and Watters's (2010) study significantly improved their perceptions of gifted children, and their expertise to plan an appropriate educational programme for gifted children was enhanced. Also within the Australian context Lassig (2009) found that primary school teachers with a professional qualification were more likely to have favourable attitudes to gifted children.

However, these findings are challenged by research by Garn, Matthews and Jolly (2010). American parents within Garn, Matthews and Jolly's (2010) study question the expertise of the teacher in working with their gifted child as they considered the teachers' expectations of their child's abilities often grossly underestimated what the parents considered their child capable of doing. Problems emerging from this discrepancy in perspectives were considered by parents within this study. The parents perceived themselves as the 'expert' in assessing their child's abilities, and argued the teachers did not have enough expertise in gifted education. When viewed through the Foucauldian lens, an expert discourse which promotes the teacher as the 'expert' invokes power relationships between the parents and the teachers. The parents in Garn, Matthews and Jolly's (2010) study argued the "negative attitudes parents had toward the motivational climate of their children's schools stemmed from the perceived inability of teachers (whether specially trained or not) to meet the competence needs of these gifted children" (p.269). The researchers assert positioning the parent as the expert "deemphasized teacher authority and the adequacy of the schooling environment in favour of parental oversight and control" (p.267).

Early childhood teachers within Murphy's (2005) Aotearoa New Zealand investigation into the play patterns and behaviours of gifted children within an early childhood centre incidentally gleans teacher perceptions which reflected an expert discourse. Teachers expressed hesitance in consideration of themselves as having expertise with gifted children, stating "I don't think we cater for his needs well enough" (Murphy, 2005, p. 39) or "I feel so

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slow sometimes and I know things aren't going fast enough for him" (Murphy, 2005, p. 39).

These teachers would contest being positioned as the 'expert' in education for these gifted

children. Likewise, teachers within Radue's (2009) Aotearoa New Zealand research would

contest being positioned as an expert. As a teacher-researcher, Radue (2009) investigates her

and her team's learning journey towards gaining an understanding of gifted education within

the early childhood context. Radue (2009) argues that teachers feel a "lack of knowledge,

uncertainty, and feelings of inadequacy" (p.46) with regards to gifted education.

Conversely, the six primary school leaders of gifted education programmes within

Hurford's (2013) Aotearoa New Zealand study questioned the correlation between

qualifications and an expert status. Despite not all holding specialised qualifications in gifted

education, all the teachers considered themselves to have sufficient expertise to enact

exemplary practice. Additionally, some of the gifted education programme leaders argued

that it was necessary to hold specialised gifted education qualifications as "some of the best

teachers are those who have no training at all. It's in their heart" (Hurford, 2013, p. 56). As

stated earlier, within Keen's (2005) study, parents also considered teachers qualifications to

be of less relevance than their attitudes towards their gifted children; the passion for teachers

to promote the best learning for gifted children is considered of more importance than the

acquisition of a qualification.

There are tensions between teachers between perceptions of giftedness and sufficient

expertise to refer children for gifted education programmes. The gifted education programme

co-ordinators within Hurford's (2013) study considered their designation as the expert in

gifted education practices to be challenged by other qualified teachers who had the

responsibility of identifying and recommending students to the gifted programme. Within the

Australian context, Lee's (1999) investigation into early childhood teachers who have

identified a child as gifted to extension programmes also argues there are discrepancies

between early childhood teachers conceptions of giftedness which she argues leads to inconsistencies in the teachers' referrals of gifted children. Likewise, research by Wellisch (1997) found that Australian early childhood teachers who had no specific training in gifted education were diverse in their perceptions of gifted education, and lacking in the knowledge of how to instruct gifted children when (or if) they had identified a child as gifted.

These findings are further supported by the North American research by Elhoweris (2008), McBee (2006) and Speirs Neumeister, Adams, Pierce, Cassady, and Dixon (2007) who all find that teacher perceptions of giftedness (arguably the dominant discursive image of the 'gifted' child) affected identification of gifted ability. The child's cultural background and socioeconomic status impacted upon the teachers' consideration of the child's referral into gifted programmes. Children from minority cultures and from lower socioeconomic status families were often found to be less likely to be recommended. These findings challenge Lassig's (2009) contention that teacher who hold teaching qualification s are more likely to be supportive of gifted education. Further probing into the interrelationship between qualifications, perceptions of giftedness, and effective educational practice for gifted children is warranted.

**A special needs discourse.**

The discursive construction the gifted child within a special needs discourse was queried within some studies. The principals of primary schools in Aotearoa New Zealand involved in Bush's (2011) study argued that the governmental practices allocating funding caused inequity for gifted children as "so much of the resources in schools were given to students of special needs, which meant there was no allocated funding for the children at the other end of the spectrum with special abilities" (p. 75). Newton (2009) and Needham's (2010) Aotearoa New Zealand studies into primary school teachers perceptions of giftedness also explored the

interrelationship between giftedness and 'special needs'. Newton (2009) argued that the participants within her study engaged in "national discourses of inclusion" (p.48). Teachers who identified themselves as supportive of gifted education argued that equitable practice was not provided for gifted students when their special learning, and emotional 'needs' were not being met. Needham (2010) also considered the usage of the term 'special needs' in the investigation of the special social and emotional 'needs' of gifted children in Aotearoa New Zealand. Within this study, the discursive positioning of gifted children as having special 'needs' was employed in response to the government's positioning of gifted children as having 'needs' within the NZMoE's Gifted and Talented Policy. Needham argues that consideration of the "specific social and emotional needs of gifted learners" (NZMoE, p. 6, cited in Needham, 2010) is the core principle of gifted education in Aotearoa New Zealand. Participants in Needham's (2010) study agreed that gifted education practices should be equitable with those afforded for children with other special needs

## Conclusion

Within the reviewed literature, dominant discourses and discursive images of the giftedness and the gifted child have emerged. A historic scientific discursive image of the gifted child appears to be prevalent within contemporary society, informing an image of the gifted child as intellectual, fast at learning and high achieving. Some research associated this image with an image of the gifted child as popular, friendly, well-behaved, and conforming, yet this image was challenged as misrepresentative of the emotional sensitivities of the gifted child, and limiting the potential for identification of gifted children when being popular, friendly, well-behaved are the criteria for being gifted. Other researchers contested the image of the gifted child as having more emotional and behavioural problems than others, asserting that a dominant view of the gifted child as hyper-emotional is ungrounded, and based upon

assumptions and dominant discourse of intelligent gifted individuals. In some cases, the discursive image of the academically gifted child was associated with 'hothousing' the child to generate giftedness rather than an innate ability, this promoted an image of the gifted child as 'abnormal' and unnaturally produced, whereas musical and sporting gifted ability was positioned to be positive, accepted and indeed encouraged.

An association between elitism and gifted education has been asserted by the research findings, with many researchers finding parents reluctant to share their child's giftedness with others as the gifted label may be perceived negatively, in many cases as a form of elitism or advantage for their child. A 'tall poppy' syndrome has been cited by the researchers as affecting parents' decisions regarding their gifted child. The egalitarian Aotearoa New Zealand society promotes a 'tall poppy' syndrome response to gifted children. The elitist image of the gifted individual is contested individuals with other special needs. The dominant discursive image of 'disabled' individuals positions these individuals at the opposite end of an abilities spectrum constructed within a scientific discourse. This discursive 'disabled' image places these individuals within 'needs' and 'rights' discourses. The image of the 'disabled' individual as 'needing' special dispensation, or having a right to equality contests the gifted image as 'advanced'. There are questions regarding the discourses which underpin the perspectives of the parents and the teachers that could be addressed to investigate the power/knowledge relationship between parents, teachers, and parents and teachers.

Discursive images of the 'expert' and an expert discourse was present within many of the studies. Many teachers rejected notions of the 'expert' querying the association of 'expert' status with formal qualifications, and contesting the expert status (or lack thereof) attributed to their role. In addition, the expert status afforded to the teacher was contested by the parents, who considered themselves to know their gifted child better. Some studies found that

teacher responsiveness to gifted learners was unreflective of the parents' expectations, and the gifted child's abilities diminished within the educational setting.

Some studies reported teachers employing a deficit or normalising approach to their interaction with gifted children, seeking ways to perceive their inabilities, or engage in normalising practices with gifted children. Intervention studies sought to alter the perceptions of teachers regarding gifted learners, yet the long term effects of these studies are brought into question by other studies which demonstrate how entrenched discursive images of gifted children prevail despite intervention procedures.

The governance of gifted education was called into question by many studies within the Aotearoa New Zealand context. Perceptions of the policies and procedures undertaken by the government reflect dissatisfaction and frustration at the discrepancy in provision for gifted learners compared to children with other 'special needs'. Questions regarding the expertise of teachers working with gifted children within the research queried the lack of support and education for mainstream teachers. gifted education teachers experienced feelings of isolation due to their views of gifted education, and dominant discourse within the educational setting which maintains an 'all children are gifted' discourse.

These discourses and discursive images will serve to inform the findings within the analysis of the data. Dominant and alternate discourse will be explored in relation to the discourses drawn out of the literature within this review. Prior to the analysis, a discussion of the methodological procedures undertaken to access the participants for the study, the methods carried out to source the data, and the ethical considerations for the data, will follow.

# Chapter Four: Methodology

## Introduction

Within this chapter I will outline the theoretical and paradigmatical underpinnings that informed the research design. I will also outline the ethical considerations that guided the research process and impacted upon my interactions with participants and collection of data. I will outline the modes of inquiry I utilised to collect the data for the research, and explain the way in which the data was analysed, and the connections between the theoretical and paradigmatical underpinnings of the research, and the methods of data analysis. I will also provide a description of the groups of participants who were involved within the study.

## Theoretical and paradigmatical underpinnings of the research

As outlined within Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework, it is the theories of Foucault, and some wider bodies of work which consider his theory, which shape the theoretical framework of my study. While Foucault never specifically claimed to be a postmodernist, his theories reflect many postmodern perspectives, such as the rejection the notion of developing a single unifying theory, rebuffing the belief in a progress towards a more enlightened world, and denying the concept of uniformity determined by objective measurement tools (Hatch, 2007). The notions of the power/knowledge dynamic, dominant discourse and subjectivity are crucial to this thesis, impacting upon the research design and analysis of the data.

Qualitative methods of research fit within a Foucauldian frame, for they "allow us to build up a picture of the actions of children and adults, and locates them in shifting networks of complex interactions that make up the contexts which provide the constraints and possibilities for action and interpretation" (A. Edwards, 2010, p. 155). My intention was to make sense of the perceptions of the exemplary teachers involved in gifted education for

infants and toddlers, consequently the construction of the research design reflected a methodology which would appropriately investigate this and fit with the theoretical positioning of the study. I engaged in searching out the dominant discourses that underpin the teachers' perceptions, how these discourses are then reflected in perceptions of their practice, and power relationships enacted through these discourses. I strived not to compartmentalise perceptions of the participants, but to highlight the complexities of their constantly shifting subject positions in reaction to their negotiation with discourse and discursive images that impact upon their practice with gifted infants and toddlers. I also looked to negotiate these complexities within the contextual setting of Aotearoa New Zealand, specifically how the wider early childhood and gifted societies impacted upon the participants' perceptions and discursive constructions.

**Validity of the design.**

According to A. Edwards (2010) validity in qualitative research is dependent upon the researcher's ability to accurately and appropriately represent his or her field of study. The validity of a study is based upon the ways in which the researcher "captured important features of the field and has analysed them with integrity" (A. Edwards, 2010, p. 162). By recording the perceptions of the gifted and early childhood communities as well as the exemplary teachers nominated by these communities, I intended to capture how the fields of gifted education and early childhood education perceived the concept of giftedness and gifted education. Additionally, the way in which I recorded the data for the teacher participants, by collecting two forms of data for the teacher participants, was to allow the opportunity for validity through assessment of the consistency of the individual's responses over the two data collection points. However, my concerns with the validity of my research were also tempered by my consideration of the Foucauldian framework, particularly sensitivity to individual's

negotiation of multiple subject positions and the rejection of continuity and coherence within individuals. The shifting and changing of the participant's perspectives, the inconsistencies and the contradictions within their views would be crucial in my analysis. I agree with Hughes (2010) who asserts that "the task of the researcher is to explain this constant instability without attempting to 'capture' or stabilise it" (p. 50).

To allow for this constant instability, worked within my design was a form of reflexivity from the questionnaire to the interviews. The interview format was set out prior to the interview, but the questions that were supplied to the participants, and constructed by myself in the first instance were to serve as a guide. The interview was to allow for the teacher participants to take the interview in a direction that reflected what they considered to be important in gifted education for infants and toddlers. Additionally, the interview questions included probes from the questionnaire data that the teacher participant had previously completed. If there was an area that I felt needed more elaboration, I would ask the teacher to expound upon it in the interview. Thus, as outlined by A. Edwards (2010), the research design was allowed to be left slightly open to allow me to "respond reflexively to unanticipated evidence by slightly reshaping the design of the study" (p.160).

Teacher participants were given a copy of the transcription of the interviews to check its validity, and given the option to correct, change, or omit anything from their interviews if they decided that they did not want to include it within the study. In doing so, I aimed to add to the overall validity of the research design.

**Theoretical underpinnings for the selection of teacher participants.**

The community questionnaire was dispersed to a wide variety of gifted and early childhood communities. In order to investigate dominant discourses within the domains of early childhood and gifted communities in Aotearoa New Zealand, I sought to distribute the

questionnaire widely within these communities. The teacher participants for the research were selected through their nomination by the members of these gifted and early childhood communities as being exemplary teachers in the field of gifted education working with infants and toddlers. My intention in this method of participant selection was to only include participants who were nominated by those involved in the fields of gifted and/or early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

It was the aim of this research to identify the discourses informing the perceptions of all participants (with community respondents and teacher participants) regarding gifted education for infants and toddlers, but also investigate how the perceptions and practices of the teacher participants inform a notion of what is considered 'exemplary practice' through their nomination as 'exemplary' by gifted and early childhood communities. As a result, the selection process was set up to facilitate this, allowing me the opportunity to explore the notion that the practices and understandings of these exemplary teachers could be considered indicative of the dominant discourses held by the wider gifted and early childhood communities. The teacher participants' discourses would also be compared and contrasted with the findings from the community questionnaire. Consequently, the complexity of the contradictory discourses and discursive positions between the communities and the teacher participants are able to be investigated without the necessity to stabilise them; this allows for the data to remain complex.

In line with a Foucauldian oeuvre, the findings of the study are not concerned with the revelation of a singular truth, rather the negotiation between discourses which enact power relationships between individuals in a particular time and context. The findings of this data will not be generalisable across other milieus, as the qualitative method that I employed within my collection of data with the teacher participants does not allow for "a generalisability of the findings to other settings" (A. Edwards, 2010, p. 162). Therefore, it

was not my intention that the findings of this study would be held up as a singular truth for other educators to follow, but rather as a way of viewing giftedness, gifted children, and 'gifted education'. I will analyse how the participants negotiate discourses in their perceptions, and how these reflect and contest the discourses of the gifted and early childhood communities who nominated them. In analysing these discourses and discursive images of gifted children, relationships of power and the power/knowledge dynamic in relation to gifted children in early childhood education can be explored. It is the aim of this research to work towards having an impact upon the wider early childhood communities. It is hoped that in gaining insight into the discourses and relationships of power which legitimise particular forms of knowledge which impact upon the exemplary teachers' practices, proactive change can be enacted to promote the best interests for gifted infants and toddlers.

## Ethical Considerations

Over the course of my research, I realised that the inauspicious position gifted education has within early childhood (as outlined within the Contextual Setting chapter) affected my participants in quite personal ways. Consequently, the moral code in which I conducted myself in relation to the research took increasing precedence over the course of the study. Talking about giftedness with the teacher participants often involved personal accounts of experiences. According to Aubrey, David, Godfrey, and Thompson (2005), feasibility in research requires "the researcher to consider the whether the ways in which the research is to be conducted are in harmony with the moral code by which the researcher lives and wishes to be identified" (p. 156). I found this had particular resonance with me, as I considered my position as a researcher to be second to my perception of myself as a moral person. My intent was to celebrate the exemplary practice being enacted by the teachers involved in the study. Over the course of the analysis phase it became increasingly apparent that in deconstructing

the data to reveal the discourses, less emphasis would be given to the participants' practices and more upon their perceptions specifically with the tensions and struggle they experienced as an exemplary teacher of gifted children. Much data has been collected in relation to practice which fell outside of the scope of the final thesis.

Additionally, the perceptions of the participants frequently contested my own views of giftedness. My own perceptions have been challenged, and my views have changed in relation to my negotiation with the data. In deconstructing the perceptions of the participants, I found myself needing to look increasingly at how the teacher participants constructed their perceptions for themselves to ensure that my conceptions, opinions, and philosophy of gifted education did not overshadow their own.

Ethical consent was sought from the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee (ERHEC). In order to obtain ethical consent, a clear outline of the data gathering methods and proposal for the thesis topic was provided. Clear outlines of the background, ethical risks, proposed participants, conflicts of interest, and consent forms were supplied. Ethical consent was granted from ERHEC.

**Informed consent.**

The concept of informed consent was crucial to this research study. The participants rights to autonomy through their informed consent to participate within the research (Coady, 2010) underpinned the construction of the information sheets and consent forms (Appendices A through J).

The information sheet (Appendix A) for the community respondents was built into the structure of the questionnaire (Appendix B), appearing on the first page so participants could

choose to carry on with the questionnaire based upon their comfort with the information supplied about the research.

The information sheet for the teacher participants (Appendix C), parents and whānau (Appendix D) and management (Appendix E) of the centres where the teacher participant was employed, were all constructed into a pamphlet with my photo contained within it. The aim of this was to reduce my anonymity and build a positive relationship with the participants. This was of particular importance to me, as I was aware I would not be engaging in face to face contact with the participants. Having my image on the pamphlet allowed the teacher participants to have an image of me when we held our phone interviews, allowing them to 'put a face to the name'.

The information sheet for the teacher participants (Appendix C) described the nature and purpose of the study. It also supplied a timeline for the research so teacher participants knew the timeframe they would need to be involved within the research. This information sheet also included information regarding the interviews and potential collection of planning and assessment data (however this aspect of the research did not eventuate) The Information Sheets for all parties also clarified that all data collected in the questionnaire will be kept securely at the University of Canterbury in a locked cabinet until the study is complete and for five subsequent years at which time it will be destroyed.

Information sheets for parents, and an explanation of the research for children were also constructed, but not utilised as no planning and assessment data were supplied by the teacher participants, as teacher participants found themselves unable to supply this data as they had given this to parents. One participant offered to follow up with parents to seek out this data, but was unsuccessful.

**Confidentiality/Anonymity.**

All participants were informed that their participation in the research was completely voluntary. In the case of teacher participant nominations, personal information such as a name and contact number/email were collected. As community participants would be questioned about their perceptions regarding gifted education in the initial questionnaire, there was the potential for personal information to be contained within this also. It was vital that the participants were assured of their anonymity, and that confidentiality was of high importance.

Community participants who nominated teachers were advised that while the information that they shared will be kept confidential and not transmitted to the teacher they nominate, there is the possibility, due to the size of the early childhood community, that the teacher participants may discern their nominator. Conversely, the teacher participants needed to be aware that as they were nominated by members of the community, their anonymity may also be compromised as their nominator could potentially ascertain their identity from the details provided in the thesis. Teacher participants were also advised of this potential risk to their anonymity and consequent danger to their confidentiality.

Additionally, in the nomination of teacher participants, community participants were informed that their completion or non-completion of the questionnaire would not in any way impact upon their nomination of a teacher for participation in the research. The community participants were advised that all information shared was completely voluntary.

As the teacher participants would all be qualified and registered early childhood teachers, there would be a certain expectation of their ability to engage in professional critical reflection with their peers, as this is an ongoing requirement of the teacher registration process . As they are accustomed to discussing issues professionally with other members of the teaching community, their discussion with me regarding their teaching environment should not be a new experience; therefore discussing issues in a confidential and professional

manner should not be a concern. However, I was prepared to ensure the confidentiality of other people the teacher participant may refer to within the course of the research.

**Conflicts of interest.**

*As a researcher.*

There was the possibility, due to the small early childhood community in Christchurch, and in New Zealand, that I could have had a prior relationship with a participant in the study, this could be a teacher participant, a community or a parent. Conflicts of interest arising from a prior relationship were addressed using the same expectations of professionalism as discussed for the teacher participants. I am a qualified and registered early childhood teacher, and am expected to engage in professional critical reflection with my peers. I am expected to maintain a professional relationship with people that I encounter in my profession, even if I have a personal relationship with them. However, in the situation where there is an existing prior relationship; the participant can make the decision to withdraw from the study. Likewise, I had the scope to discontinue my research with a participant if I felt there was the potential for the personal relationship to affect my research.

*For the participants.*

As the potential teacher participants were recommended by the community participants, there was the potential for teacher participants to feel pressured or compelled when considering their participation. Teacher participants could have felt obligated to participate when nominated by a parent, as parents are clients who fund the teacher's employment, and whose opinion can bolster or damage the reputation of the teacher and centre. Likewise in the case of recommendation by the teacher's manager, there was the potential for the teacher participant

to feel pressured to participate due to the power relationships between employer and employee.

To reduce the risk of these situations, all community members were informed that their nomination may not result in participation as all teachers' participation will be voluntary. Additionally to ensure that teacher participants felt that they were protected from further harassment, community members were be informed that not all teachers nominated will necessarily be able to take part in the research as numbers of participants were limited to ensure the research remains feasible. Therefore teachers could refuse without explanation to any external parties.

**Reporting and right of withdrawal.**

Within the community questionnaire, participants were informed that all participants would receive a report on the findings of the study. Teacher participants were also informed that they would receive a report of the findings. All participants were informed to alterations to the completion date of the study. Upon completion of interviews, a transcript of the questionnaire was provided to the participants. These were kept by the participants and utilised to clarify any points or issues that the participants may have identified. Participants informed me of their consent to use this transcript as a correct representation of the interview.

All participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, and that their data and information gathered up until the point of withdrawal would be extracted from the research document.

# Modes of Inquiry

**Community questionnaire and nomination form.**

The data collection for the community questionnaire (Appendix B) occurred between June and August 2013. The data collected in the community questionnaire was used to identify the perceptions of the gifted and early childhood communities, and be utilised to source potential teacher participants for the study. The community questionnaire data was the first set of data collected for the study.

The community questionnaire was constructed utilising the Qualitrics website, commissioned by the University of Canterbury for use by students engaging in research. Once the questionnaire was constructed, the link to the questionnaire was established.

Networks from Aotearoa New Zealand, and international networks were approached to distribute the internet link to the community questionnaire. Additionally, networks on Facebook were approached to share the link to the questionnaire. These networks are outlined in Table 1 and 2.

*Table 1: Aotearoa New Zealand and International Networks.*

| Aotearoa New Zealand Networks | |
|---|---|
| | • Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa NZ Childcare Association |
| | • The New Zealand Association for Gifted Children www.giftedchildren.org.nz |
| | • The Gifted Education Centre www.giftededucation.org.nz |
| | • The Gifted Kids Programme |

| | |
|---|---|
| | www.giftedkids.co.nz |
| | • REACH Education<br><br>www.reachgifted.org.nz. |
| | • Canterbury Association for Gifted Children and Youth http://cagcy.org.nz/ |
| | • The Christchurch Association for Gifted Education (CAGE) |
| | • North Canterbury Support for Gifted and Talented Children (NCSGTC) www.ncsgtc.co.nz |
| | • OAGAT Otago Association Gifted Children http://www.pakikikids.org/ |
| | • Waikato Association for Gifted Children http://waikatogifted.wordpress.com/ |
| | • SAGE: Secondary Auckland Gifted Educators<br><br>http://www.giftedconsultant.ac.nz/SAGE.html |
| | • Gifted Education Consultant www.giftedconsultant.ac.nz |
| | • University on Wheels http://www.universityonwheels.org/ |
| | • Gifted Education Services www.giftededucationservices.co.nz |

| | |
|---|---|
| | • The giftEDnz Early Years subcommittee. |
| | • Gifted Kids NZ<br><br>http://www.giftedkids.co.nz/ |
| | • Small Poppies<br><br>http://www.giftededucation.org.nz/smallpoppies.html |
| International Networks | • The World Council for Gifted and Talented Children, Inc. http://www.world-gifted.org |

*Table 2: Facebook groups.*

| | |
|---|---|
| Facebook Groups | • **Mary's gifted contacts** |
| | • International Gifted Education. |
| | • Ilam Early Learning Centre's |
| | • Talent is Over Rated - reflections on raising life long learners. |
| | • Les Tribulations d'un Petit Zèbre's |
| | • Gifted Education Centre's |
| | • GiftEd |
| | • Ingeniosus |

| | |
|---|---|
| | • [Gifted Homeschoolers Forum](#) |
| | • [Dazzled and Frazzled](#) |
| | • [High Ability](#)'s [timeline](#). |
| | • ["How To" Life Consultants, LLC](#) |
| | • [Hoagies' Gifted Education Page](#) |
| | • [Academic Booster Club of Puyallup](#) |
| | • [NWGCA - Northwest Gifted Child Association](#) |
| | • [The Washington Coalition for Gifted Education](#) |
| | • [NAGC Britain](#)'s [timeline](#) |
| | • [Giftedkids.ie](#) |
| | • [Gifted Kids](#) |
| | • [Conceptual Foundations Network of NAGC](#) |
| | • [Prufrock Press: Gifted Education and Gifted Children Resources](#) |

| | |
|---|---|
| | • Great Potential Press, Inc |
| | • The CHIP Foundation |
| | • Gift Rap |
| | • Extreme GT & Multi-exceptional |
| | • World Council for Gifted and Talented Children |
| | • Gifted Online |
| | • Parents of Gifted Children Resource Group |
| | • The Brain Cafe |
| | • ADULTE INTELLECTUELLEMENT PRECOCE |
| | • Børn med særlige forudsætninger - Forældregruppe |
| | • Intelligente Børn |
| | • Vidste du det om intelligente børn?? |
| | • Enfants Surdoués Haut Potentiel & Douance Québec |

| | |
|---|---|
| | |

A short outline of the intentions of the study was posted to these Facebook groups (Appendix F). The questionnaire (Appendix B) consisted of questions regarding the respondents' understandings and perceptions regarding gifted education and gifted education for infants and toddlers. Built into the questionnaire was also the option to nominate an exemplary teacher to be involved within the study. The respondents could choose to nominate and complete the questionnaire, only nominate, or only complete the questionnaire.

Upon closure of the survey, the responses were collected from the Qualtrics website and downloaded into a Microsoft Excel file to be analysed.

**Teacher participant questionnaire.**

The teacher questionnaire (Appendix G) was constructed to gain an understanding of the exemplary teachers' perceptions of gifted education for infants and toddlers, their methods of education for these infants and toddlers, and the philosophical underpinnings to their practices. The questionnaire was constructed to ensure that the teachers could respond in their own words to the questions, consequently the questionnaire consisted of open ended questions with room for the teacher participants to write their own textual replies. The questionnaire was emailed or posted to the participants once they had consented to participate within the study. Participants could choose to write their responses on a computer or by hand. Self-addressed return envelopes were supplied to the participants to return the data when they had completed the questionnaire.

**Teacher participant interviews.**

Interviews were selected as a data collection method as they allow participant the opportunity to express themselves using their own language and terms, inviting me as a researcher to encourage the participants to become narrators of their own stories (Chase, 2010). By using their own words and terminology, the teacher participants were able to define what gifted practice means to them in a way that they wish to express it. Consequently, the interview structure encouraged the teacher participants to utilise their own language from which discursive constructs could be interpreted. This would allow the opportunity to identify discursive images of giftedness, infancy and toddlerhood, and gifted infants and toddlers.

Following on from the questionnaire, the interviews were used to deepen my understanding of the perceptions of the participants. Within the design of the interview as outlined to the participants, I allowed myself the opportunity to tailor questions to the individual teacher participants relative to their responses within the questionnaire in order to gain a deeper understanding of their perceptions. The interviews were semi-structured as, in agreement with Fontana and Frey (2003) it is not only my actions as interviewer, but our interaction as interviewer and respondent that will glean meaning. The interview format sheet (Appendix H) was sent to the teacher participants prior to the interview, but the semi-structured approach allowed for areas of interest to be investigated further as they are brought up by the participant (Siraj-Blatchford, 2010).

Interviews were conducted upon the phone at a time negotiated to suit the teacher participant and myself. The interview was outlined to last no longer than 45 minutes. If the interview extended past this time, the teacher participant was made aware that the time had lapsed, and we could finish the interview if the teacher participant required. Interviews over the phone were considered to be the best approach as the majority of the participants were not based in Christchurch.

At the beginning of the interview the teacher participant was welcomed, and the teacher participant identified themselves using the pseudonym they chose for themselves for the recording. At the conclusion of the interview the teacher participant was reminded of the confidentiality requirements and their right of withdrawal. The participants were also reminded that they were able to contact me at any stage for further information, or in the case of any issues or concerns.

Transcripts were sent to the teacher participants as quickly as possible (one week was the standard time frame) following the interview to ensure they were able to accurately assess the reliability of the transcription. The teacher participants were encouraged to correct me if any mistakes had been made in the transcript.

## Participants

**Community respondents: Online survey.**

Members of the community who completed the questionnaire will be identified as 'respondents' or 'community respondents' within this thesis. Over the two months that the survey was online for respondents, 202 people viewed the survey. Of those 85 fully completed the survey and 11 partially completed the survey, giving a total number of 96 respondents. Of these 96 respondents, 44 were from Aotearoa New Zealand, and 52 were from other countries. International respondents were mostly from the United States of America; however there were also respondents from Canada, Australia, France, Ireland, and Belgium. As befits the scope of this study, to consider the specific context of Aotearoa New Zealand, only the data from the questionnaires completed within Aotearoa New Zealand were considered. Of the 44 respondents, 14 were teachers (7 in early childhood education); 25 identified as a parent of a gifted child.

**Teacher participants.**

Teachers who participated within the study will be identified as 'participants' or 'teacher participants' throughout this thesis. Potential participants were contacted by telephone or email using the information provided by the community questionnaires. I introduced myself to the potential participant and identified the focus of the research. I then explained the community questionnaire that had been sent out, and the opportunity the respondents had to identify a teacher as being an exemplary teacher for gifted infants and toddlers. I then explained to the potential participant that they had been nominated to participate in the research. I gave the participants the opportunity to view the information pamphlets and consent forms (Appendices I to K) to choose whether they would like to participate or not. Initially four teachers were approached to participate in the study with three consenting to take part. Upon review of the data, it was determined that two more participants should be invited to the study to ensure an accurate representation of the field of research, outlined earlier to be necessary for the validity of the study.

All five of the participants were female and chose their own pseudonyms: Linda, Iri, Esy, Elaras and Mina. Of the five participants, four chose to identify themselves as European or New Zealand European, and one chose not to identify her ethnicity. Over the course of the research, three of the five participants revealed that they were born and raised in countries other than Aotearoa New Zealand and had immigrated in their adulthood.

At the time of the research three of the five participants (Mina, Esy and Iri) were currently employed as teachers for infants and toddlers, or toddlers (children under the age of 3). Linda had held a position working with infants and toddlers in the last year, but was currently employed in a primary setting, and Elaras taught part time with toddlers.

The nominations for participants were made by the members of the gifted and early childhood communities, therefore the discursive image of 'exemplary' as teachers of best practice in gifted education within the scope of this study is defined by these communities allowing me to research and tease out the implications of these discursive images within the context of Aotearoa New Zealand. The gifted and early childhood communities' positioning of these teachers as exemplary and exceptional within the field of gifted pedagogy denotes the image of an 'exemplary' teacher. Teachers involved in the study were investigated were investigated as they were considered the embodiment of what the community considers to be socially and culturally appropriate pedagogical practice in gifted education.

### *Involvement of the participants and their perceptions of giftedness.*

Of the five participants, four – Linda, Esy, Mina and Elaras all expressed a passion for gifted education for infants and toddlers. These four participants were willing (in some cases actively) to participate in the research. Conversely Iri was reluctant to participate in the study as she perceived herself as being on a "different wavelength" (Iri, Interview, p.1) from me. Iri expressed her initial reluctance to participate upon reading the questionnaire. At first, Iri explained that she was concerned that her views on giftedness and gifted education were very different to my own views, and that made it difficult for her to answer the questions within the questionnaire. She expressed concern that she was not answering the questions in the way that I thought they should be answered. I accepted Iri's concerns, and we did not work together at the beginning of the data collection period. But as I became more involved in my research, I became concerned that her different views would not be included within the research. This would not be a fair nor accurate representation of all the individuals identified as exemplary teachers by the community. I approached Iri again, and explained my thoughts.

She agreed to be a participant as she expressed an interest in the topic, and explained that she would like to learn more about giftedness.

I have highlighted this difference as it is my view that Iri's conceptual difference is integral to the overall comprehension of the findings and discussion. Iri's views are not uncommon within the domain of early childhood education. Her inclusion within this research, especially as she has been identified by someone in the community as being an exemplary of gifted toddlers, will give greater understanding to the tensions with giftedness in early childhood education. How this impacts upon pedagogical practice is explored within the Discussion chapter.

## Analysis

The texts within this research will be analysed utilising a Foucauldian theoretical perspective. Discourse, according to Foucault, is not limited to language, as in other forms of discourse analysis. Instead, as outlined within the Theoretical Framework chapter of this thesis, discourse is the means in which statements are made rendering objects and subjects to be understood within particular physical and temporal contexts, and to comprehend how these statements and their visible practices become 'truths' (Foucault, 1980a). Consequently, Foucauldian discourse is not only the investigation of the language within the text, but the analysis of shared understanding, or the normative positioning of objects and subjects, and the power relationships that this normative positioning imposes.

It is important to revisit how the term exemplary is being positioned within the context of this research. Foucauldian theory underpins the analysis of the data, therefore it is necessary not only investigate the discourses that inform the perceptions of the participants, but the notion of exemplary as a discursive construct. Consequently, in my investigation into

exemplary practice, I recognise that exemplary is a discursive construct, and the nominated participants are discursively positioned by the community as the image of an exemplary teacher.

The discourse analysis I applied to the textual data produced within the research study was concerned with perceptions of truth held by the participants and respondents within the study, and locating their correlation with discourses portrayed within the wider literature base identified within the literature review, and the Contextual Information section of the thesis. I was interested in how these exemplary teachers constructed their perceptions of gifted education for infants and toddlers, and how they were reflective or divergent from the wider perspectives held within the context of Aotearoa New Zealand.

In my analysis I attempted to query the power/knowledge dynamic between individuals within the domains of the early childhood and gifted education. I sought to investigate power relationships that impact upon, and are produced by the participants. Dominant and divergent discourses between the participants were identified. Legitimate knowledge and regimes of truth informing the perceptions of the participants were highlighted in order to identify how the participants are positioned in relation to legitimised 'truths', and how these 'truths' impact upon the subject positions made available to them. In order to represent this within the Findings chapters, the data was grouped into areas of common truths held by the participants.

In reading the data, I asked myself the following questions to guide my analysis:

- How is knowledge constructed by/for the participants in order to become a truth or norm for their practice?
- How is truth positioned within the discipline of early childhood education? Within gifted education? What are the contesting discourses? What knowledge is legitimised? What are the dominant discourses, or regimes of truth?

- How does dominant discourse impact the subject positions made available for the participants? How does this impact the infants and toddlers/families/wider community?

- What possibilities and/or realities are excluded by this legitimised knowledge? Who is privileged and who is subjugated?

- What power relationships are in action? How does this affect the participant, and how do they enact power relationships with others?

In order to achieve this, it was necessary that I analyse the data without engaging in the error of making "second-order judgements" (Kendall & Wickham, 1999) in which I would impose a causality upon the data, looking to make judgements about the participants statements. As a result, as stated previously, my intention was to link the perceptions of the participants to the wider discourses held within Aotearoa New Zealand, either through their engagement with the dominant discourses held, or their involvement in divergent discourses. Additionally the aim was to identify points where discourses utilised by the participants contested and constrained each other, resulting in a point of tension for the participants.

## Conclusion

My decision to utilise a Foucauldian approach informed all my decisions regarding ethics, data gathering and its subsequent analysis. The contesting discourses that compose the participants' perceptions, and affect their interactions with gifted infants and toddlers were recognised and accepted as a part of the many aspects that make up the participants' subjectivities. The power relationships between the participants and others, dominant discourses that inform these relationships, and alternate discourses employed by the participants were investigated to determine how exemplary practice is constructed within

Aotearoa New Zealand. The impact that opposing discourses regarding giftedness and gifted education within the wider society had upon the teacher participants affected my consideration of the notion of exemplary within this study.

# Chapter Five: Findings and Analysis 1: Discursive images of giftedness

## Introduction

As explicated earlier in the Theoretical Framework chapter, Foucault was concerned with the location of power through an investigation into the individual and relationships between individuals. Power within society is not located outside the individual, nor is "the individual is amputated, repressed, altered by our social order, it is rather that the individual is carefully fabricated in it, according to the whole technique of forces and bodies" (Foucault, 1979, p. 217). Dominant discourses fabricate the individual within the social order. These regimes of truth, maintained by varying disciplinary regimes, constitute available subject positions for individuals. Individuals occupy and negotiate between these subject positions, gaining pleasure or being disciplined from engagement in particular discourses. Individuals negotiate between multiple contesting subjectivities within their interactions in a variety of discursive practices. Normalising effects are welcomed or contested according to the subject's engagement in discourse.

Foucault considered the analytical problem to lie in "in seeing historically how effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false" (Foucault, 1984b, p. 60). Dominant discursive constructions promoted as truths within society promulgate legitimate forms of knowledge. The promotion of discourse as a truth is problematised through disruptions in its dissemination and permutation within, by and for the members of society. The disconnection of continuity within these truths creates fields of contestation for individuals to promote alternate discourse.

Individuals engage in power relationships through their utilisation of the term gifted. giftedness as a discursive construction serves to limit the "discursive positions that are

available for children to experience their lives" (Duncan, 2010, p. 100). In positioning infants and toddlers as gifted, participants and respondents construct a discursive image of the child. This discursive image informs their interpretation of what giftedness is, informed by populist or expert opinion. As discussed within the Contextual Information section of this thesis, the utilisation of the term gifted is grounded in the discursive fields of developmental psychology and education. Many of the participants struggled with the use of the term gifted as they negotiated with the contesting discursive images promoted within the domain of early childhood. The following chapter will attempt to unpack these contesting discourses.

## There is No Giftedness, All Children are 'Confident and Competent'

*Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) is considered to be highly valued and influential to all of the participants' pedagogical practices with gifted infants and toddlers. The discursive image of children being 'confident and competent' learners dominates the perceptions of many of the participants and some respondents within the study.

Iri discursively positions all children as 'confident and competent', refusing to single out particular children as 'gifted'. Iri promotes a 'confident and competent' discursive image of the child. The discursive construction of children as 'confident and competent' underpins Iri's perception that a concept of giftedness is unnecessary:

> *...we really try to look at that...aspirations statement. And when I ask the other [teachers], that's why they couldn't really say that they [the children] were gifted, because, um, you know, we look at all children like that. (Iri Interview p.9)*

Iri's image of the child is constructed from the discursive language within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996). In her view, all children are considered to be confident and competent. As all children are constructed into this 'confident and competent' image, Iri

argues that pedagogical practice should be the same for all children, irrespective of gifted ability. In the community questionnaire, the discursive construct of the child as 'confident and competent' also featured. A respondent in the community questionnaire contends they would not choose to identify a child as gifted at a young age, as they would "prefer to let them develop their gifts while developing their confidence and competence as learners" (Respondent 39, Question 6).Whilst this respondent does not reject the image of a gifted child, as s/he acknowledges the child's "gifts", the gifted child's development of their 'confidence and competence' is considered to be of equal importance.

The aspirations statement of *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996), specifically the positioning of all children as 'confident and competent' has become a normative construct, defining children's lived experiences within the domain of early childhood education. Farquhar (2008) asserts that most student teachers can "recite the 'confident and competent' child ode of *Te Whāriki* like the ABC song" (p.33). Whilst this was not the main argument of this thesis, the engrained nature of the 'confident and competent' ode, the immutability of the aspirations statement within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) as an unquestioned 'truth' for children's learning is maintained within this comparison. Within early childhood education, the image of the child as 'competent and confident' supersedes and supresses alternate discursive images; the image of the child as 'gifted' is rendered defunct through engagement in an 'all children are confident and competent' discourse. However, this image serves to construct a homogeneous view of children. These discursive constructions objectify and colonise children's bodies and lives.

The governmentality of early childhood education regulates the promotion of the discursive image of the child as 'confident and competent' through pleasurable incentives for education settings that comply with *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996)

and disciplinary measures for those who don't enforced by the Education Review Office. A favourable report by the Education Review Office promotes the setting as a quality provider of education, which is promoted to parent/consumers as proof that the early childhood setting is desirable for their children. A negative report disciplines the teachers and management of the setting, potentially dissuading parents from enrolling their children, financially affecting the education and care centre through reduced numbers of children attending. Foucault explains "we should never forget the principle that the market is a general social and economic regulator" (Foucault, 2008c, pp. 139–140). According to the market-driven model, the popularity of an education and care centre affects its viability within the market. The more popular it is, the more people will utilise it, and the more funding it will receive. The less popular, the less funding, and the less likelihood it will stay in business. The disciplinary effects of the Education Review Office impact upon this marketability. In order to remain viable as a business, the early childhood setting is compelled to comply with *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) and position children as 'confident and competent'. Therefore, technologies of government or governmental apparatuses (Foucault, 2009) inform the dominant discursive image giftedness for the educational domain.

*Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) has altered perceptions of giftedness through the promotion of all children as 'confident and competent'. Iri expresses that since the implementation of *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996), she is uncertain of a concept of giftedness, stating:

> *I've probably changed, over time than I would have when I first started teaching, I thought it was quite different gifted behaviours, and, um, but now. Um, I'd probably see everyone, more, as competent and confident from the aspiration of Te Whāriki.*
> (Iri, Interview, p. 2)

Iri's perception is directly influenced by *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996), which has altered Iri's previously held views on giftedness. As legitimised knowledge regarding the education of children, *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) has normalised discursive images of young children and marginalised others. Subject positions derived from this legitimised knowledge serve to authenticate or discipline the subject, promoting their compliance and supressing their defiance, creating normal and abnormal spaces for individuals. The gifted infant and toddler, the parents who identify their child as 'gifted' and the wider whanau and community are subject to this discursive construct.

Elaras also specifies the phrase 'confident and competent 'as integral to her practice stating:

> *...the aspiration for children, um, I've actually got it written down, is to grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging, and the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society. And, yeah, that's definitely what we are aiming for. (Elaras, Interview, and p.17)*

As for Iri, the aspirations statement is influential in Elaras' practice. However, Elaras contends that *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) is ideal for gifted children as it is constructed to be "all about meeting needs" (Elaras, Interview, p.18) which she contends fits with best pedagogical practice for gifted infants and toddlers. Evaluating all children as 'confident and competent' is arguably compartmentalising as it ascribes a normalising discursive image of the child which for teachers who do not support a concept of 'giftedness' enables a discursive view of the child which negates the necessity to evaluate the child as 'gifted'. Yet the discursive image of the child as 'confident and competent' is equally enabling as it promotes images of the child that are supported by the exemplary teachers in this study as 'best practice' for gifted infants and toddlers. With regards to gifted education,

Elaras deems that it is because of *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) that "our preschools are doing it quite well" (Elaras, Interview, p.23) in promoting the best interests of gifted children. Consideration of the child as 'gifted' or not is inconsequential as appropriate interpretation of the curriculum works towards extending the children's strengths and abilities irrespective of their level of ability.

Mina and Linda also contend that the principles of *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) support the education of all children, including gifted children, within the context of the early childhood setting. Linda identifies the positive role *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) has in supporting individualised learning, especially for gifted infants and toddlers who require extension.

Likewise, the aspirations statement of *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) is identified by Esy as integral to her practice. Esy's concept of inclusive education for gifted children is informed by the aspirations statement, supporting her argument for equitable learning opportunities for gifted infants and toddlers,

> *...I believe that if there is a program and policy in the centre that helps to mainstream mentally challenged children, then likewise mentally gifted children should have the opportunity to become competent, confident contributing member of the community. (Esy, Questionnaire, p.3)*

Inclusivity and equitable practice for gifted children is promoted through Esy's interpretation of the aspirations statement. Esy contends that gifted children are entitled to the same opportunities and benefits as children with other special needs. The gifted child is defined as a child of 'special needs' through Esy's association with 'mentally challenged' children, an image of the gifted child that I have argued is supported within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996), yet colloquial constructions of the child with 'special needs'

renders the gifted child invisible. Further discussion on this discursive image will be discussed later in this chapter.

Yet some of the participants argue that it is challenging to develop the child to be 'confident and competent' when there is a lack of clarity in how to implement the curriculum. Linda contests the curriculum for the lack of clear direction on how to implement its principles for gifted infants and toddlers. Linda describes *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) as "quite bland" (Linda, Interview, p.24) arguing "I think it takes a good facilitator, a good educator to build the extra bits of vocab into that learning objective that may not be there" (Linda, Interview, p.24). She argues that the implementation of *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) requires the teachers having in-depth knowledge of how to take a child further in their learning, but does not guide the teacher how to do this. *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) is referred to by Linda as a hindrance to practice for gifted infants and toddlers. Linda argues that as a curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) is not specific enough to ensure that teachers are adequately implementing an appropriate curriculum and relevant extension activities for gifted infants and toddlers. Linda emphasises the importance for teachers to know how to extend gifted infants and toddlers, but argues this is not taught to teachers, nor outlined within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996).

This concern is echoed by Esy who struggles to promote specific strategies for extending learning for the gifted toddler as the unqualified teachers within her setting cannot effectively implement *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996). As a leader within the setting, Esy does the majority of the planning and assessment as she argues specific training is required to grasp the ways in which *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) should be used to inform and extend learning for gifted infants and toddlers. In her experience it is not about the inability of *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of

Education, 1996) to guide teachers, but the lack of training that the teachers in her team have to utilise it appropriately. This problem will be further discussed within Chapter Eight.

Iri does not express problems in implementing *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996). Iri argues that pedagogical practice should be the same for all children, irrespective of gifted ability, stating:

> *we follow that aspiration of Te Whāriki, so we see them as confident and competent...*
> *we are just trying to do the ZPD all the time for everyone. (Iri Interview pp. 6-7)*

Iri contends that the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978) informs a discursive image of children as capable of achieving a higher level of ability relative to their own current capabilities. Iri challenges developmental discourse with Vygotskian (Vygotsky, 1978) theory, stating:

> *...learning drives development is the main thing [in Vygotskian theory]...most*
> *[teachers] have it the other way around, you know that most of the teachers are still*
> *stuck on, that development drives learning...[with] all children [we] try and get them to*
> *their higher...we know that they can do that with our assistance .(Iri, Interview, p.11)*

By engaging in Vygotskian sociocultural discourse, Iri contests that all children are able to be extended appropriately according to what their learning interests are, irrespective of ability; consequently, Iri contends that there is no need to identify children as gifted. The utilisation of the term 'gifted' is rendered defunct through the consideration of all children as 'confident and competent'.

## Tensions With the Term 'Gifted'

The term gifted is the primary term utilised by the respondents to the community questionnaire. Out of the 45 respondents, 8 did not use the term gifted, or used in it a critical

fashion, for example "I don't believe in labelling children as gifted Instead I query the very construction of the term" (Respondent 41, Question 9). Respondents who did not use the term gifted, or used it in a critical fashion, queried the existence of giftedness and considered the practice of using the term gifted equivalent to labelling children. Tensions with the utilisation of the term gifted and a correlation of the designation 'gifted' with a negative connotation of 'labelling' individuals is also present within the data from the study participants and will be discussed below. While few of the respondents were uncomfortable using the term gifted, the majority used this term comfortably in their responses.

Conversely, Iri, Esy, Elaras and Mina all express hesitance and even reluctant to utilise the term gifted. Iri explains that the term gifted is not used by the teachers within the education and care centre stating:

*...we probably didn't use the word gifted, really...we just said, you know, we think they are very talented, and isn't it amazing that they can read? And this and things like that, we have said more about what we saw, but we didn't call them gifted. (Iri, Interview, p.4)*

Iri demonstrates a reluctance to use the term gifted, instead describing the child as 'talented'. Iri and her colleagues are reluctant to use the term gifted as Iri explains they do not consider themselves "qualified to say that" (Iri, Interview, p.4). This implicates an expert discourse. The expertise required to assess gifted potential is considered to be the exclusive domain of trained psychologists who are the legitimate authorities upon giftedness. This will be discussed further in Chapter Seven.

At one point in the interview, Iri uses the term gifted to describe children she has taught, but quickly alters this to another term, stating:

*...some Japanese children that were gifted, well mum I mean, she didn't actually say*

*they were gifted, but, um, they were highly talented anyway, and um, they could read*

*English and Japanese, adult um, you know quite advanced....(Iri, Interview, p. 5)*

Iri's initial use of the term gifted is quickly revised for the terms "highly talented" and "quite advanced". Iri also corrects me when I refer to the programme that her centre previously implemented as a "gifted programme", stating "gifted and talented programme" (Iri, Interview, p.3). Iri displays more comfort in using the term talented, as used previously where Iri stated "we think they are very talented" *(Iri, Interview, p.4).* Foucault contends "[o]n one level, discourse is a regular set of linguistic facts, while on another level it is an ordered set of polemical and strategic facts (Foucault, 2001b, pp. 2–3). The utilisation of alternate terms in the place of gifted serves as both a linguistic fact, as alternate terms serve to supplant the term gifted, and a strategic fact, as alternate terms can serve to displace individuals who identify as gifted and reduce cohesion for individuals who are claimed by multiple discourses, and constructed through multiple discursive images. The query is: what power relationships are generated from these discursive positions, and for whom does the discourse serve (Foucault, 1980b). Teachers are positioned as an expert within the domain of early childhood education (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2012b). Their promotion of a particular discursive image of children is maintained to be a truth within the setting. The use of alternate terms to the term gifted promotes alternate linguistic terminology, strategically constructing an accepted image of gifted children within the setting for the parents and child, seeking to supplant their own discursive images. Although there is a history of utilising alternate terms within research and policy within Aotearoa New Zealand (Hill et al., 1971; Parkyn, 1948), in the utilisation of alternate terminology to the family or individual concerned, a dominant subject position is promoted. Alternate subject positions from the home environment contest those of the early childhood setting.

In Iri's centre, parents commonly use the term gifted with the teachers, and express a keen interest in positioning their child as a gifted individual, despite Iri and her team's hesitance with the utilisation of the term gifted. Contesting discursive images of the child (the parent's discursive image of their child as gifted and the teachers' construction of the child as 'confident and competent') create tensions for the teachers, families and children, potentially impacting upon the infant/toddler's negotiation of subject positions. The normalisation of discourses and discursive images for the child in the home and education and care setting create spaces of contestation which must be negotiated by the infant/toddler in their daily experiences.

Although Iri's team does not position children as gifted, she explains that they are very receptive to the parents' opinions, and ask how they can help to extend the child's learning further. Iri insists that upon enrolment the teachers within her team give parents an "understanding where we are coming from" (Iri, Interview, p.6) with regards to their position on giftedness, and the parents choose to stay or leave based upon this understanding. The promotion of the discursive image of the child as 'confident and competent' by the teachers potentially positions Iri and her teams' discursive image of the child as the dominant discursive image to parents. This image potentially marginalises discursive images of giftedness which may be supported by the parent of the child; the promotion of the teacher's 'expert' (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2012b) discursive image denotes other images to be of less importance.

Iri articulates if she is to refer to a child as gifted, that she will position the child first, stating "it's a child who is gifted rather than a gifted child" (Iri, Interview, p. 2). Iri's discursive positioning of the child as "a child who is gifted" reflects the possible multiple subjectivities of the child instead of constructing a single modernist identity of the child. This is echoed within a response from the questionnaire, in which a respondent writes "I think we

may have more 'well rounded individuals' if we allow children to be children first, and gifted second" (Respondent 19, Question 6). Here the respondent queries defining the child solely according to a single attribute, contesting that this limited gaze constraints the promotion of 'well rounded' development. The respondent draws attention to their perceptions of the impact positioning a child as a 'gifted child' will have in the development of the child's other subjectivities, limiting available alternate subjectivities when the child is only viewed/labelled as a gifted being. Questions arise regarding the use of the term 'well-rounded'. This description of the 'well-rounded' child infers the image of a child who is able and competent in many domains. As it is argued there will be 'more well-rounded individuals' if giftedness is displaced in favour of positioning the child first, the consideration of 'gifted child' is less 'well-rounded'. This normalises the view of the 'well-rounded' child, preferring this image to a child who may excel in specific areas. Within the literature review, the normative view of the 'well-rounded' child abnormalised gifted children; promoting the call for 'allowing children to be children' instead of promoting the gifted abilities of the child. In displacing the term 'gifted' in this way, the tall poppy syndrome is invoked. Gifted children are maligned for the abilities they do not have, rather than celebrating those they do. This egalitarian view of the gifted child creates tensions in the utilisation of the term gifted, through colloquial social perceptions of 'giftedness'.

The problematic, negative discursive image of the gifted child is circumvented when the term gifted is not utilised to describe gifted infants and toddlers. Elaras argues the term gifted is not necessary when the gifted individual is considered according to their "areas of interest" (Elaras, Interview, p.26), and by "teaching to the child…you don't even have to mention the word gifted if you don't, you know if you don't want to" (Elaras, Interview, p.26). Conversely, Linda promotes the use of the term gifted within her educational practice, arguing that the term gifted should be considered to be "another part of the language that we

use generically…around children (Linda, Interview, p.28). Linda asserts that there is limited understanding of giftedness in her experiences working with early childhood teachers, sometimes leading to negative discursive images of the gifted infant/toddler within the early childhood setting. Dominant discourses which negatively construct the image of the gifted infant and toddler limit the available normalised subject positions for individuals who choose to adopt a gifted subject position. However, Linda maintains many early childhood teachers and parents are open to learning more about giftedness, and misconceptions could be addressed through dissemination of information on giftedness. This perception is supported by Wong and Hansen (2012) who assert that most early childhood teachers would agree with the intentions of gifted education, but are uncertain how to use the term 'gifted' without further professional development.

Esy's teaching team avoid the term gifted when discussing children's abilities within their education and care centre. Esy explains the experience she had with a child she considered to be potentially gifted, explaining:

> …I think that the word that we just use for him is, yeah, he is intelligent…he is
> advanced for his age, he is very good with language…the word gifted is not used at
> all…he is not, um, termed as being gifted. (Esy, Interview, p.16)

Esy's perceptions of the infant or toddler as gifted are displaced through the utilisation of alternate terms. However, Esy also expresses unease in using the term gifted in her practice due to a perception of herself as lacking sufficient expertise to do so. She is reluctant to do so as she would "not want to place, um, myself in a position where I could not really…provide enough evidence" (Esy, Interview, p.3). Esy is reluctant to use the term as she does not consider herself to have the necessary expertise to make this claim. Additionally, Esy argues she would not be able to provide enough 'evidence'. Esy expresses concern as she considers the ascription of giftedness to an individual as a procedure which requires evidential proof in

order to be considered true. Requiring an evidential basis for claims of giftedness infers engagement in the scientific discourse in the assessment of gifted ability. Evidential data is represented as proof, and constructs a 'truth' to be followed. Without evidence to prove that the child is gifted, Esy's assessment of the infant/toddler's giftedness can be disregarded. By problematising the scientific discourse, Esy could query the prominence ascribed to the scientific discourse within her setting, and reclaim validity within her assessments of gifted infant/toddler's abilities.

Esy explicates that in her experience, parents do not use the term gifted. Parents refer to the behaviours that the child is exhibiting,

> [M]ost of them are just saying that there is something. Most probably we would say…'Oh, look, your child has used this word and he is just amazing at what he is doing' and then they would…quantify that by saying what they are doing at home too. (Esy, Interview, p.26)

Esy assents to the suggestion that parents may be wary of using the term gifted for their child as teachers do not use this term within her education and care centre. Likewise, Iri describes situations where parents will knowingly not use this term and will wait for the teachers to talk to the parents about the toddlers' high levels of ability. As stated earlier, within Iri's setting, teachers will clearly outline their perspectives regarding giftedness upon enrolment, setting a normative discourse for the milieu. This discursive image of the 'confident and competent' infant and toddler is informed through *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) as legitimised knowledge. The promotion of this image creates normal and abnormal spaces for individuals. Iri states that in these instances where parents perceive their child as gifted, but will not use this term with teachers, the teachers will approach the parents in reference to the child's abilities, but will not position the child as gifted or 'potentially gifted'. Parents who employ a discursive image of their child as a gifted being must choose between

promoting this discursive image within the early childhood setting, or adopting the discourse promoted by the teachers. Mina also acknowledges that parents do not use the term gifted for their child, and instead refer to the behaviours of the child, stating:

> *…I don't think we had any parents coming to say 'Oh, my child is gifted' But we have parents saying 'oh, um, this is what my child does'. You know, 'what do you think about it?' (Mina, Interview, pp. 7-8)*

Mina contends that parents her experience actively avoid using the term gifted for their child as the term gifted can label the child. Arguably, positioning children as either 'gifted' or 'confident and competent' is an act of evaluation, which colonises the subject, and enacts power relationships between those that are evaluated and those that evaluate (Foucault, 2003). The problems of the gifted 'label' are explored further in the following section.

## Giftedness as a Label

Discursive images *for* the child rather than *of* the child position children as being subject to the interpretation of others. Respondents and participants query the value in discursive images imposed upon the infant or toddler, referring to this action as a negative 'labelling' of the child. In labelling the child, the discursive constructs and all connotations connected with the label, negative and positive will be applied. In the case of the gifted label, there are associated expectations regarding children's performance. Mina queries the value in using the term gifted when these expectations negatively affect the child and their families, and argues parents avoid using the term gifted as "parents don't want to put, put themselves or the child in this position…to have that huge expectation from such a young age" (Mina, Interview, p.9). In this respect, the term gifted serves to compartmentalise the child, rendering them

subject to the evaluative gaze of the public and their dominant discursive image of 'a gifted child'.

An egalitarian discourse affects decisions regarding the rejection of the gifted label. A respondent within the community questionnaire argues infants and toddlers should not be identified as gifted

> *...[b]ecause children should not have labels put on them, when they reach school age it is obvious who is gifted... As the mum of a gifted 6 year old, they can be behind in some areas. My son was slow to talk and ran in to things an[d] had behavioral (sic) issues, as he grew older around age 4, he achieved basic skills but had an underlying ability with reading and maths. This was not apparent prior to age 3, if anything he was behind others his age, now he is a year ahead and still...top of the class. (Respondent 11, Question 6)*

This respondent contends that the asynchronous development of children can confuse consideration of the child as 'gifted', consequently there should not be the ascription of a gifted label. This parent contends the gifted ability did not express until the child was four years old, but prior to this the parent only identifies areas in which the child's development was lacking. This parent further argues "all children should be encouraged and nurtured to the next level so there is no benefit of a gifted label" (Respondent 11, Question 6). The consideration of the 'benefits' of a gifted label and the evaluation of the child according to their deficits is indicative of the 'tall poppy syndrome' and an egalitarian discourse; the perception that gifted children are 'privileged' and 'benefit' from their giftedness, and the perception that these benefits should be mediated by the child's deficits resonate within this respondent's reply. These dominant colloquial and societal discursive views of the gifted child impact parents' perceptions of their children, rationalising their behaviours to fit within normative images of the gifted child.

The rejection of a gifted label is supported by other respondents. One contends "all very young children are gifted, i [sic] think it is a waste of time to put the gifted label on a child before they are at least of school age" (Respondent 5, Question 6). Discursively constructing all children as gifted, or as having gifted potential also infers an egalitarian discourse in which "standing tall can elicit very negative responses" (Moltzen, 2004, p. 140).

Historic discourses of giftedness still impact upon present day images of gifted children. One respondent argues "children's development is fluid, so we can't be sure that what happens for very young children will be how they operate when they are older. So why label??" (Respondent 41, Question 6). This respondent asserts that children do not necessarily continue to be gifted over the course of their lives, consequently they should never be labelled gifted. This query problematises the power effects children's discursive images can have not only in the immediate timeframe, but over the course of their lives. The ascription of the gifted label is considered to impact upon the image of the individual over the course of their lives if this giftedness is not maintained throughout the life span, inducing the image of the parent who would have to "swallow their chargrin" ('Over- Taught Children.', 1908) when their brilliant child does not turn out to be a brilliant adult. Yet the construct of a singular identity over the course of a life is underpinned by a modernist perspective. Shifting, multiple subjectivities, as reflective of post-modernist complexity, are not considered when the negative 'effects' of a label are accepted.

The problems of a gifted 'label' are reconceptualised in light of a construction of the individual embodying multiple subject positions rather than a singular identity. Mina contends that by labelling infants and toddlers as gifted there is the possibility they may "lose who they are" (Mina, Interview, p. 12). Mina argues "you don't want them to become a label, you want them to be their own person and develop their personalities" (Mina, Interview, p. 12). The development of their personalities, authoring their own subject positions is

considered by Mina to be limited by the application of a gifted label. These limitations are invoked through discursive practices connected to the negative societal and colloquial discursive images of the gifted child. Mina asserts that once the child is labelled gifted, negative power effects for the child from parental social groups occur, stating,

*...I think the hugest pressure on parents from my experience is the...playgroup and the competition of whose child does...what [first] ...I think parents among themselves put the biggest pressure...than anybody else (laughs). (Mina, Interview, p.9-10)*

Mina argues that discursive constructions of the gifted child within the parental community promotes comparisons and competition between children, objectifying the child, legitimizing the hierarchical power of the adult over the child and denying their rights to define themselves according to their own image (Cannella, 1999). The positioning of the term gifted within the community makes particular subject positions available to the gifted infant or toddler. This is supported within the community questionnaire by respondent 42, who states

*the danger of early labelling would be to deny young chidlren [sic] the chance to 'just be'. Once a gifted label is put on a child there can be heightened expectations from parents about academic progress. Young ones need to be able to potter in the sand pit, play dress ups etc. without every interaction being looked at as a 'gifted learning opportunity'. (Respondent 42, Question 6)*

This respondent contends that the ascription of the gifted label reconfigures the image of the child as needing constant extension. The image of the intervening adult who 'hot-houses' the gifted child is invoked and contested by the assertion that children should be allowed to 'be children'. Both of these images are constructed for the child, rather than being of the child. Mina implies the ascription of the label gifted is for the understanding of the adults, not for the understanding of the child. The term gifted is not necessarily important to infants and

toddlers in Mina's view, she contests this procedure asserting "for them [gifted children] it doesn't mean anything" (Mina, Interview, p.2).

However, Mina assents the ascription of a label is sometimes necessary as "sometimes you have to label them to actually put that information across" (Mina, Interview, p. 29) to others within the educational domain in order to explain why certain behaviours are being exhibited by the child. This is similar to a contention by Elaras that the assessment of gifted ability, and the ascription of the 'gifted' by expert assessors is sometimes required to convince the wider community of a child's gifted ability, stating "formalised testing is…for everybody else, it's not necessarily for the child or the family, or even for us, but it's certainly for, um, for the others (Elaras, Interview, p.31). This process of evaluation of the infant or toddler is problematised when positioned from the perspective of the infant or toddler.

## Giftedness as a 'Special Need'

Some of the respondents position giftedness as a special need. Many of the respondents explicate the importance of individually appropriate educational practices which respond to the "individual learning needs" (Respondent 15, Question 1), or the "different learning needs" (Respondent 20, Question 1) of the gifted child through "appropriate differences in instruction" (Respondent 44, Question 1); to "challenge, stimulate and include all children's educational needs" (Respondent 5, Question 1). A discursive language pertaining to the needs of gifted children pervades the answers of the respondents. Additionally, Mina, Esy, and Elaras position gifted infants and toddlers as having special or specific needs. Mina states that she considers gifted children "in the same place as children with special needs" (Mina, Interview, p. 16); Esy contests that giftedness should be afforded as much prominence as other special needs; and Elaras contends that we are giving children who need reading recovery, and "have specific learning needs" (Elaras, Interview, p.21) a disproportionate

amount of attention to children "at the other end" (Elaras, ibid). When the needs of the gifted child are considered to be 'special' or 'specific', this is in relation to the normative development of individuals in relation to the population. When the individual is positioned outside of the norm, there is the potential to construct the individual as abnormal, and the attribute of the individual as undesirable (Kearney & Kane, 2006) as demonstrated within the negative discursive images of giftedness illustrated within this thesis.

Discourse is "really no more than the repressive presence of what it does not say; and this 'not-said' is a hollow that undermines from within all that is said" (Foucault, 2002, p. 28). Gifted children are either rendered invisible in their exclusion from *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) or within the undermining repressive hollow of what is not said about giftedness within the curriculum. By being identified as 'children with special needs' within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) gifted children are discursively positioned. However, the term 'children with special needs' is commonly perceived to be a replacement for the term 'handicapped children'(Runswick-Cole & Hodge, 2009). Within the domain of early childhood education, special needs is considered to be concerning "children with disabilities" (Dunn, 2000, p. 74). The image of the child with 'special needs' is contested by elitist discursive images of gifted individuals; this elitist image, endows gifted individuals with an advantaged position within society (Sternberg, 1996). This elitist image is further problematised within egalitarian societies, like Aotearoa New Zealand (Moltzen, 2004), which positions all individuals as equal intellectually (Sternberg, 1996). Constructing gifted individuals as having a 'special need' becomes a problematic action; these multiple images create tensions within the subjective positions made available to the gifted infant or toddler positioned within these contesting discourses.

Additionally, there are problems with the construction and positioning of children as having 'needs'. In addition to the respondents stating it is important to cater to gifted

children's learning needs, Mina states it is important to "ensure that learning is responsive not only to children's strengths and interests, but to their needs as well" (Mina, Questionnaire, p.4). Linda argues in facilitating learning for gifted infants and toddlers, is it important to ensure "as best you can that you are accommodating the needs of the child" (Linda, Interview, p. 12). Mina differentiates between the strengths and interests of the child, and the needs of the child, positioning needs as discreet from strengths and interests. Linda places value in including gifted children's needs. Likewise, Elaras and Esy discuss the learning 'needs' of children within the data. The construction of learning 'needs' is problematised within Foucauldian analysis. In evaluating the child and ascribing the learning needs of the child, the evaluative gaze of the viewer/assessor is promoted. The designation of a 'need' is determined by the assessor, subjecting the child to the circumscription of that assessor. Ascribing needs to gifted infants or toddlers situates them within the discourses employed by the assessor. Foucault argues that the term subject has two meanings, "subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to" (Foucault, 1982, p. 782). Evaluation of the 'strengths and interests' or 'needs' of the gifted child colonises the child, and makes the child subject to this evaluative gaze. By situating the child as a being of needs, the child is subjugated to the authoritative power of the adult.

Within special education needs research it is argued that the discursive positioning of special education needs should be supplanted with the term 'educational rights' to combat institutionalised exclusionary practices generated from the discriminatory identification of these children (Runswick-Cole & Hodge, 2009). Within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) children are positioned as "having individual needs and rights" (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 19). However, Foucault characterises a 'subject of right' as a being who is subject and subject to these rights, specifically the schism between

the rights that fall within the domain of the subject, and those which are transferred as a member of society. Individuals becomes subjects of right

> *only when he has agreed at least to the principle of ceding these rights, of relinquishing them, when he has subscribed to their limitation and has accepted the principle of the transfer… who agrees to a self-renunciation and splits himself, as it were, to be, at one level, the possessor of a number of natural and immediate rights, and, at another level, someone who agrees to the principle of relinquishing them. (Foucault, 2008b, pp. 274–275)*

The undertaking of defining children as beings of 'rights' is to acquiesce to a juridical system, to position juridical rationality as a truthful rationality, and adhere to its laws and governance; to promote the child as a governable being whose rights are accorded and denied according to legislative doctrine. The claims to 'empowerment' of individuals through discourses of 'rights' and 'social justice' may potentially be considered as giving back power, rather than the constant pull of forces that are power relations within Foucauldian theory (Deleuze, 2006). This perception of power, externally held and denoted according to external authority limits perceptions of the individuals' ability to negotiate power relationships through positioning gifted children as beings of right; compartmentalising the problem within the bounds of the juridical system, displacing the problem from the educational domain, dislocating action from educators, parents and children who consider themselves bound by the disciplinary actions undertaken through juridical policy. These disciplining actions dislocate power from individuals and promotes docility (Foucault, 1979).

Arguably, the positioning of 'special needs' encourages discriminatory practice, as the specialised needs of these individuals are grounds for discrimination whether it is negative or positive, however positioning children's special needs as an issue of 'human rights' equally discriminates the child. This conundrum is no different for gifted children. Medical and

scientific discourses serve to colonise the gifted child through the application of normalised measurement tools which discriminate the gifted child and designate their 'needs'. These discursive tools are positioned as true and accurate assessments of this special ability, differentiating those who may be designated gifted and those who may not. The needs of these gifted children are assumed based upon these discursive tools, encouraging discriminatory practice. Conversely, other individuals with overlooked abilities are marginalised by these discursive tools, their 'needs' are not addressed.

The discursive construction of giftedness as a need focuses upon the assumed requirements for the child designated as gifted. Individuals identified and designated as 'gifted' are positioned as the 'other' who can be deemed by society to be a problem, their need as disproportionate to their numbers. Within the economic discourse, these problems are quantified according to economic principles; a 'cost benefit analysis' is applied to assess the value of the input to the potential outcome. Within this discourse, another discursive image of the gifted infant or toddler is applied, that of a 'being of potential'. This image is employed by many respondents and participants, who identify the goal of education or gifted education to be for children "to develop their full potential" (Respondent 15, Question 1), "To help gifted individuals reach their highest possible potential" (Respondent 19, Question 1), or "reach their full potential" (Respondent 27, Question 1). One respondent identifies this contentious nature of the term 'potential' by stating "I could always use the much maligned 'potential' word here" (Respondent 22, Question 4). Unfortunately, they do not elaborate further on their perceptions surrounding the term potential. The concept of potential, the potentiality of an individual within the society is bound up with the economic discourse informed by a neoliberal form of governance.

The historic discursive image of the child as a being of human capital, associated with their involvement within education and care settings is maintained within current discursive

language of the child as a being of 'potential'. The investment into an individual is perceived as an investment into human capital. Foucault describes this human capital equation as the investment into a child that "can be analysed in terms of investment, capital costs, and profit—both economic and psychological profit—on the capital invested" (Foucault, 2008c, p. 244). The theory of human capital applies economic principles to domains of society hitherto considered to be non-economic (Foucault, 2008a). Human capital, the future potentiality of an income based upon the input invested in the individual, is inseparable from the individual invested into, not transferable to others. The investment placed into gifted individuals, who are often already perceived as advanced in relation to their abilities and normative development, is considered to be further advancement. The neoliberal governance of the education system positions the application of resources to be distributed in ways that will maximise the perceived best outcomes for the maximum numbers of individuals, rather than equitable outcomes for the few with special needs (Wills, 2006). In relation to an economic discourse, the potential social service costs to the governmental investment in gifted individuals compared to 'at-risk' individuals are less 'profitable'. Gifted individuals are perceived as being able to achieve in spite of minimal extension, whereas 'at risk' individuals will provide the greater future human capital when invested into.

The historical discursive positioning of the education and care setting as an establishment set up to cater to children who are 'at risk' is evoked through the positioning of children being 'at risk' of failing if they do not participate within early childhood education. Within the educational setting, individuals who are positioned as 'at risk' are considered to be 'disadvantaged' and strategies set in place to mitigate these 'disadvantages' (Quinlivan, 2002). The children attending an education and care setting are discursively positioned to be saved through their participation from being 'at risk' of future failure. Arguably, gifted individuals are seldom positioned as future failures.

The domain of gifted education is also positioned by the respondents to be a concern of inclusionary practice. One respondent describe the ideal educational setting to be "where they [gifted infants and toddlers] can feel totally accepted, equal and understood by their peers and teacher and extend their learning" (Respondent 27, Question 1). Another respondent writes "if gifted education was a norm children could feel included no matter what their level of achievement or interests" (Respondent 33, Question 1). Yet another identifies an essential attribute of a teacher of gifted infants and toddlers to be "knowledge of inclusion" (Respondent 12, Question 9). Inclusion and inclusionary practice are positioned as an issue of social justice, a means in which to redress the "exclusion of children and young people who have historically been excluded or marginalized" (Kearney & Kane, 2006, p. 203).

Alternate interpretations of inclusionary practice, which positions all children to be included rather than those traditionally situated as having special needs, is challenging the traditional model which encourages discriminatory practice. Again, this is positioning inclusionary practice as an issue of human rights, which serves to unsettle the dominant discourses which promote exclusionary practices. The didactic presentation of this problem must be queried, as there are complex interrelations between other aspects of education such as quality provision and family/whānau participation (Bailey Jr., McWilliam, Buysse, & Wesley, 1998). Inclusionary practice and the academic mainstreaming of gifted students has also been queried for its inability to meet the rights of the gifted individual to be adequately challenged, specifically when compared to sporting giftedness where individuals are encouraged to compete and train against competitors based upon ability rather than age (Cramond, Benson, & Martin, 2002). The application of inclusionary practice to ensure equitable learning for gifted individuals is problematic when inclusionary practice in Aotearoa New Zealand has been positioned to be concerned with accessing the curriculum "alongside other students of similar chronological age" (Ballard, 1996). Methods of effective

extension for gifted individuals – inclusionary or specialised – need to be addressed further within the gifted community of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Whilst many of the respondents position gifted education needs within the domain of special needs education, Esy problematises the relationship between gifted education and other special needs education, pointing to inequitable practices between the two domains, stating:

> *we are really providing as much support with, the, those children who need, uh, help in terms of behaviour management and in terms of men, uh, mentally, um, am I using the right term? Mentally challenged?, but with giftedness, we could only say, "Oh that child has shown really an advanced" or, uh "he is receptive to something, or is very good, his language is", but that's it. It stops there. (Esy, Interview, p.15)*

Traditional definitions of children with special needs were limited to children with disabilities (Runswick-Cole & Hodge, 2009). The term 'children with special needs' was derived to reconstruct the image of the child as 'differently able' instead of 'disable' but both of those images construct the child in reference to normative images of ability. The correlation of these images is still in effect as demonstrated by Esy's education and care centre policy for special needs, which does not reflect new definitions including gifted children within this group. This lack of inclusion of the gifted child reifies normative views of the construction of a child with special needs as a child who is disabled. The exclusion of gifted children from special needs policies excludes gifted children from considerations of inclusionary practice, and renders gifted children invisible. This exclusion impacts upon the consideration of gifted children as a valid group of individuals, colonizing the gifted child and silencing their perspectives. Esy contests the silencing of gifted children within the realm of inclusionary practice, arguing this impacts upon the understandings of teachers who are not provided with

the knowledge or skills they need to confidently identify gifted infants and toddlers and use the term gifted in the same way they are able to support children with other special needs.

## Summary

There is significant hesitance and even outright reluctance or rejection of using the term gifted by some of the participants. Participants explain that the term gifted is considered to carry varying negative connotations which affect perceptions and expectations of the child who is described as gifted. Some of the teachers considered using the term gifted to be labelling the child, which they consider to negatively impact upon the infant or toddler. Some participants argue the negative positioning of the term gifted within the wider community then compartmentalises the child to behave a particular way, and conform to the expectations of what it means to be gifted. Some of the participants reasoned that there is no need to use the term if the learning needs of the child are being sufficiently met through a strengths-based curriculum approach. However, one of the participants is confident in using the term gifted, and wants to see more done to inform the wider community on the positive connotations that can be associated with this term, and have it become more commonly used in the vernacular of early childhood education.

# Chapter Six: Findings and Analysis 2: A Developmental Discourse

## Introduction

As explained earlier within this thesis, discourse is a group of statements belonging to the same discursive formation; the statement itself is never neutral, it is bound within the enunciative field; coexisting, presupposing and implying other statements within the wider network beyond the statement (Foucault, 2002). The author function denotes a relationship between author, text and transmission within society. This is a discursive relationship that should be taken into account when considering the discourse and how it enacts a power/knowledge relationship within society. The subject position of the speaker, denoting what can and cannot be said, is essential in the analysis of discourse. Statements within developmental and socio-cultural discourses are subject to the authorial location of the creators of these paradigmatic ideologies as "founders of discursivity" (Foucault, 1984c, p. 114). In this way, Piaget (Piaget, 1952) and Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1929) as 'authors' have transcended their own writing, and "produced something else: the possibilities and the rules for the formation of other texts" (Foucault, 1984c, p. 114).

Developmental discourse has influenced western definitions of giftedness. The developmental theory of Piaget (Piaget, 1952) has also been highly influential in the establishment of appropriate pedagogical practices in early childhood education. However more recently there has been a shift from a dominant developmental approach within early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand. The developmental discourse has been challenged due to the assumptions it makes about universal child development which, as a product of developmental psychology, are founded upon positivist traditions of research (Cannella, 1997). The utilisation of alternate discourses within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) indicate a movement away from the dominant developmental

discourse towards the desire to situate learning according to the contextually located needs of the individual. *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) was also constructed with a concern for "learning in a social and cultural context" (Carr and May, 1990, cited in Te One, 2003, p. 26). This movement has influenced the discourses utilised by early childhood teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand, and the discursive images of the infant and toddler.

Contesting discourses co-exist within the pedagogical framework of *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) informing teachers perceptions of appropriate practices with children. Educators, parents, children are discursively constructed through the subject positions promoted through the legitimised texts. Discursive images informed by the developmental and socio-cultural discourses normalise certain behaviours, and abnormalise others. These images are further legitimised through a regulatory system which functions to promote these texts as mandatory practices, governing the educator to comply.

The developmental discourse has also influenced concepts of giftedness, and informed paradigms for gifted education. Conceptualisations of giftedness are informed through a developmental psychology underpinning. No new theories have been generated by research into giftedness, instead theories are informed by developmental psychology (Ambrose, Tassel-Baska, Coleman, & Cross, 2010).

These contesting discourses of childhood impact upon the participants philosophical positioning of the nature of giftedness and interpretation of children's learning trajectories. The contesting space between legitimised discourses in differing fields of education constructs and reconstructs the individual in multiple ways in multiples spaces. The contesting nature of these two discursive domains problematises transmission of concepts of giftedness and gifted education within early childhood education and the potential for philosophical alliance between these two domains. Within the next section, I will attempt to

deconstruct the complexities between these two discursive rationalities through the perceptions of participants and respondents.

## Contesting the Developmental Discourse

Many of the participants query the validity of the developmental discourse in relation to interpreting curriculum for gifted infants and toddlers. In problematizing developmental discourse, the participants are attempting to intervene in the effects of power relations, displacing constructs of 'truths' that locate thinking regarding children and childhood. Mina identifies the tensions between her perception of a 'holistic individual development' of a gifted infant/toddler and the normative paths constructed through developmental discourse. Within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) Mina asserts there is an incongruity in varying recommended practices stating:

> *...Something that bothers me about Te Whāriki...stages and ages of development, and...the expectation is each child will meet...certain learning outcomes...I think we all view children holistically and...individually and see...their own learning paths. (Mina, Interview, p.22)*

An incongruity stems from the contesting developmental and socio-cultural discourses. Mina challenges the developmental discourse within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996), interrogating the way in which it universalises children's abilities specifically an age appropriate and stage based approach to learning. Within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996), children's development is delineated into discreet domains relating to the stage of development the child will be exhibiting in relation to their age. Learning strands of the curriculum are interpreted into discreet boxes "For Infants; For Toddlers; For Young Children" (pp .49, 51, 53, etc.) as the "Examples of

experiences which help to meet these outcomes". Mina considers the developmental discourse to be inappropriately determining a specific line of development for children which does not fit with a socio-cultural discourse. Developmental discourse, which constructs an image of a fixed path of development, is contested by a socio-cultural discourse in which development is perceived as "multidirectional rather than aimed at specific endpoints" (A. Smith, 2013, p. 207). She argues that educators will not interpret curriculum for children solely according to a dominant developmental discursive image of the child, but mediate this image with other discursive images of children and children's development. Mina argues that the negative impact the developmental discourse could have upon teachers' pedagogy with gifted infants and toddlers is minimised by the equal prominence given to alternate discourses of children's learning and development within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996). In this way, the contesting discourses within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) can be negotiated to construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct the child through multiple discourses. May (in S. Farquhar & Fleer, 2007) asserted that *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) is a constituted from a number of epistemological influences, which "for a period of time were able to stand alongside each other as a whāriki" (p. 35). Consistent with Mina's perception, *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) is grounded in contesting paradigms of educational theory which can be woven together to construct into a curricular framework which is responsive to the teacher, the child and the cultural context, but can also cause confusion in the negotiation between discourses and teachers' understanding of the differences between these discourses.

Conversely, Iri asserts the developmental discourse is still dominant within early childhood teachers' interpretation of curriculum for children. She states that upon release of the curriculum document the socio-cultural focus surprised her and her peers, and questions whether a socio-cultural theory of development has truly impacted teachers' approaches to

learning, stating "I think it's just taken teachers a long time to understand the shift…lots of centres haven't shifted and you still see practice from developmental practice" (Iri, Interview, p. 10). In Iri's view tensions between the underpinning discourses of the national curriculum document remain. As outlined above, developmental discourse is evident but not dominant within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996), however is it asserted that the foundation of early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand was based upon a dominant developmental theory (S. Farquhar & Fleer, 2007). Cullen (1996) contended at the outset of *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) that the challenge would lie in altering teachers' perspectives and practices; according to Iri, this is still a concern.

Where Mina reasons that teachers will dismiss the ages and stages sections, and focus upon the holistic relativistic view of the child, Iri contests this perception, questioning whether the socio-cultural focus of *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) has truly impacted teachers' approaches to learning. In supporting diverse theories of children's learning, there are opportunities for developmental practices to remain entrenched. The contesting discourses within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) are argued to enable teachers to weave a curriculum appropriate to their specific learning context; the right "to choose the content of their learning and the process by which this would be transmitted" (Reedy & Reedy, 2002, p. 2). A singular perception of pedagogy is negated. The interpretive nature of *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) enables teachers to maintain developmental practices as teachers can 'weave' an approach that validates these practices. However, if practices for children's learning are not problematised or critiqued, they become dominant discursive practice.

Developmental discourse is also challenged by the participants as gifted children do not conform to universal age/stage constructs of child development. Mina asserts that an individual view of development is more appropriate as gifted infant and toddlers' learning

needs could "be all over the place" (Mina, Interview, p.22). Understanding of asynchrony in gifted children's development is considered crucial by many gifted researchers (Neville, Piechowski, & Tolan, 2013) Developmental discursive images of the infant or toddler construct an image of the child as progressing through discreet hierarchical levels of development, which designate the abilities of the infant or toddler in relation to their chronological age. According to Mina, the restrictions of an age and stage based theory of development limits teachers' understandings of gifted children's abilities and potentiality, and compartmentalises them into a paradigm of development that does not reflect their varied proficiencies. Within the developmental discourse, subject positions for gifted infants and toddlers are limited to perceptions of what a child should be doing at a particular age. The age of the child designates the stage of development; the stage of development designates the experiences that are relevant to the child's level of learning. Mina contends that the gifted learner should not be limited by a developmental discourse as gifted learners are ready for learning opportunities earlier than considered 'age-appropriate', arguing "we shouldn't stop them just because they are not of age" (Mina, Interview, p. 24).

Likewise, Elaras queries the appropriateness of a developmental discourse when developing curriculum for a group of gifted children. According to Elaras, education for gifted infants and toddlers should be based upon individual needs, not upon an age-based model, as this approach will not reflect the gifted individual's diverse levels of ability. These universal images of a child's abilities are not relevant to the relative advanced learning progression of an individual gifted infant or toddler.

The developmental discourse constructs an deterministic image of the child, passing through specified ages and stages informed by the belief and acceptance of progress as a natural human state (Foucault, 1980a). Elaras contends there is variability in the abilities of a group of children in an education and care setting irrespective of their shared chronological

age. The individual learning needs of each child should guide the teachers' pedagogical practice rather than a developmental approach. Elaras states:

> ...you can't just go "I've got a class of three or four year olds, or five year olds...they are all the same age so they should all be able to do this activity...at age three, um, you've got the people who can't do it and you've got the people who have been able to do it for years (laughs). (Elaras, Interview, p.33)

Elaras queries the appropriateness of a developmental lens when assessing ability. Elaras argues that fixed-age settings in which children are grouped with children of the same age should not limit perceptions of ability based upon developmental discourse as some children will not be challenged by 'age specific' resources. Consequently, a developmental approach to learning, which would conclude that all the children at a particular age would be requiring the same learning activities does not match the learning of the gifted child whose abilities are varied and diverse. The developmental discourse has been challenged due to the assumptions it makes about universal child development which, as a product of developmental psychology, are founded upon positivist traditions of research (Cannella, 1997).

Iri displaces the developmental discourse by rejecting the view of universal development for children. In discussing her perception of the term gifted, Iri explains she would not call a child gifted as she would not compare the child's abilities to others, stating, "we probably wouldn't even say, compared to other children, probably we wouldn't use that language" (Iri, Interview, p.7). Discursive images maintained within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) of the individual child as a unique being, described as "the individual child" (p.8) situated within the world of "relationships with people, places and things" (p. 14) discursively constructs the child to be a unique individual within the domain of early childhood education within Aotearoa New Zealand. Children are positioned to have

"wide variation in the rate and timing…of development" (p. 20) with prominence given to the consideration that "each child learns in his or her own way" (p. 20).

The discursive positioning of children within the discipline of early childhood education constitutes a system of control in the promotion and dispersal of discourse (Foucault, 1971). Despite being informed by a developmental discourse in delineating the Learning Strands into discreet age/stage based areas, the developmental discursive positioning of children in relation to a progressive universal continuum is contested within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996). In positioning children's development as a unique individual progression as "although the patterns of learning and development are sometimes seen as a progressive continuum linked to age, such patterns vary for individual children in ways that are not always predictable" (p. 21), the curriculum document contests the developmental discourse. Achievement is deemed to be assessed according to the progress the individual has made in relation to their own achievements rather than comparative measures relative to the other children in the setting, because "[a]ssessment of children's learning and development should always focus on individual children over a period of time and avoid making comparisons between children" (p. 29). Educators' discussions of a child's abilities are made in reference to their previous achievements, and the rates of progression the individual has made in their learning. Iri's construction of the term gifted is informed by these dominant discourses promoted within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996). Iri draws connection between utilising the term gifted and making comparisons between children, and drawing comparisons between children is not considered to be appropriate in her educational setting. Iri adopts the discursive image of the child as a unique individual who cannot be compared to other children. Comparisons between abilities underpin Iri's concept of giftedness, consequently Iri justifies her view that the consideration of gifted ability is unnecessary when individual educational needs are addressed. By

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eliminating comparisons between children's abilities, each child is considered according to their own capabilities. Each child's capabilities are planned for according to where they are at, and what they need to extend them further. Consequently, Iri contends because every child is extended to meet their individual potential, consideration of gifted ability is redundant.

Elaras queries the value of utilising the term gifted, and posits the possibility of rejecting this term entirely. In Elaras' experience, it is not necessary to use the term gifted when discussing the educational outcomes for a gifted child, stating:

> *if you forget the word gifted, and I wish we could, then you talk about their areas of interest, you talk about their strengths, you, um, you are actually, basically if you forget the word gifted, um, then what you are doing is you are actually, um, teaching to the child…if you give the child activities that suit their need, suit their interests and suit their learning style, then you don't even have to mention the word gifted if you don't, you know if you don't want to. (Elaras, Interview, p.26)*

Elaras expresses a desire to move away from the term gifted, and move towards a strengths based curriculum approach for gifted children. Akin to the position held by Iri, Elaras asserts that children's learning needs can be met individually irrespective of their giftedness. Respondent 41 also queries the necessity to position children as gifted, asking "What is the point? With very young children, ALL children's development needs to be enhanced from 'where they are at' to the next stage" (Respondent 41, Question 6). The application of an individualised strengths based curriculum displaces comparative assessment. giftedness discursively constructed to be the comparison of individuals according to a standardised/normalised developmental frame, contests individualistic non-progressive theories of human development.

The rejection of a homogenous image of the child is also undertaken by Linda, who writes,

*Every child is unique and quite specific and should be afforded room and time to grow,*

*develop and blossom! I have never judged any individual against another as I believe in*

*the fabulous-ness of being unique. (Linda, Questionnaire, p. 7)*

This is further reinforced within the interview when Linda also states, "holistically you never judge another child by another" (Linda, Interview, p.14). The utilisation of the term 'holistic' by Linda is consistently associated with the term 'individual'. Linda's discursive image of the individual child implicates the connectivity of the discursive terms holistic and individual rather than their separateness. Both Linda and Iri share the perspective that individuality underpins their practice and comparisons are to be rejected, however in contrast to Iri, Linda argues consideration of the concept of giftedness is intrinsic to the holistic view of the gifted child. In cases where teachers do not take the infant or toddlers gifted potential into consideration in their planning Linda asserts that the teacher's rejection of gifted ability "clouds the vision (of the teacher), then they are not giving the child a holistic chance. They are diluting what is happening." (Linda, Interview, p.15). Consequently, according to Linda, a dogmatic rejection of gifted discourse conflicts with an adherence to an individualised, holistic approach. In Linda's view, a thorough and responsive view of the learning of the gifted infant or toddler includes acceptance of gifted ability, and consideration of a conception of giftedness. Without this consideration, Linda contests the ability of the teacher to view the 'whole' child as befitting a holistic pedagogical approach. Within Linda's perception, developmental discourse and socio-cultural discourse converge within her perception of the gifted learner. The gifted child is constructed within a developmental discourse; however, Linda integrates a discursive image of the child as culturally located/locatable through their cultural construction of themselves, or parental construction of the child as a gifted learner. In Linda's view, rejection of a concept of giftedness reduces understanding of the child, and arguably an understanding of the expression of their abilities

and potentiality. Construction of the child within a giftedness discourse makes subject positions available for the child to live their lives and employs a specific evaluative gaze, which in Linda's view enables the educator to more clearly see the child's abilities rather than 'diluting' them.

The presentation of pedagogical practice to the child is also different between Elaras and Linda. According to Linda learning for gifted infants and toddlers "needs to look to the child exactly as it does for every other child" (Linda, Interview, p. 9) however the praxis informing the learning should be constructed in such a way as to consider the infant or toddlers' gifted ability. Consequently consideration of gifted ability is be taken into account when planning for learning, but the presentation of that learning to the gifted infant or toddler will look the same as for all children. Elaras' perspective contrasts with Linda's view that the rejection of a consideration of giftedness will limit the teacher's holistic approach to the child's learning. Linda asserts that a thorough and responsive view of the learning of the gifted infant or toddler must include consideration of giftedness. However, Elaras contends (as did Iri earlier in this section) that there is no necessity to consider the concept of giftedness if the child is having his or her interests attended to. There are tensions between these two positions which will directly impact the child's subjectivity within the education and care context. The construction of the child within a giftedness discourse makes subject positions available for the child to live their lives and employs a specific evaluative gaze, whereas rejection of this discourse rejects the subject positions, and construction of characteristics and behaviours within this discourse. Rejection of a gifted discourse ensures the child is not compartmentalised by a 'gifted label' however this also limits alternate views of the child produced by the gifted discourse. In Elaras' view, a giftedness discourse is supplanted by interest-based pedagogical practice. Linda argues that ways of viewing the

child are legitimised within a gifted discourse which enables the educator to more clearly see the child's abilities and discern a more specific pedagogical approach.

Correspondingly, Mina draws attention to the necessity to look at gifted infants and toddlers holistically, to "ensure that learning is responsive not only to children's strengths and interests, but to their needs as well" (Mina, Questionnaire, p.4). Here Mina differentiates between the strengths and interests of the child, and the needs of the child, discursively positioning needs as discreet from strengths and interests. This compartmentalises aspects of learning, evaluating the 'strengths and interests' or 'needs' of the gifted child according to the evaluative gaze of the viewer.

Furthermore, within the interview, Mina associates the needs of the child, with the behaviours of the child, arguing that if the individual needs of the child are not met, then the child will resort to exhibiting negative behaviours through lack of stimulation. Interestingly, Mina contests the reference to behaviours made by other teachers when assessing gifted ability. The evaluation of the child according to these negative behaviours constructs a damaging image of the gifted child invoking the image of the 'emotionally disturbed' gifted child, affecting the child's subjectivity within the education and care environment relative to the evaluative authority of the teacher. Mina argues gifted infants or toddlers who are only provided developmental 'age and stage based' activities will demonstrate frustration which will result in negative behaviours. When teachers do not understand that the negative behaviour is the expression of frustration of the individual infant or toddler's gifted ability, the child is constructed as "disruptive" (Mina, Interview, p.18), which limits the teacher's understanding of the reasons behind the negative behaviours, and the necessity for an individual learning programme to counter them. Mina argues in the case of frustrated gifted ability "very often engaging the child will remove the behaviours anyway" (Mina, Interview,

p.18), but asserts an individual programme will benefit the gifted infant or toddler, rather than expecting the child to fit within a group programme.

The problems of expecting a 'gifted' child to fit within a programme constructed through a developmental discursive lens are also identified by Esy. Esy argues that a she struggles with individually extending children as she does not have the authority to accelerate the child up to the next age group where she argues the resources and facilities would better suit the child's abilities. She contends that these children exhibit frustration from being under stimulated, which is then treated as it becomes considered to be a 'behavioural problem' which garners more attention than arguing the child is 'under stimulated'. The construction of the age groupings and the provision of specific resources for children of particular ages are grounded within the developmental discourse. Esy's rejection of a developmental discourse is tempered by her necessity to negotiate within this discourse, as her arguments must consider a developmental perspective in order to construct a 'valid' argument to accelerate the child. The child can only be constructed through the discourse as an 'advanced' individual in order to be considered for advancement. In this way, the developmental discourse not only impacts upon the structure of the education and care centre, dissecting the child into chronological age groups which are provided 'age-appropriate activities', but also the subjectivity of the gifted infant or toddler who is evaluated through the developmental gaze. This developmental gaze positions children as more or less capable based upon their age, assuming children learn best with others within the same age bracket, rather than considering alternate opportunities for situating children's abilities as fluid and dynamic, based upon individual ability, experience, opportunity and interactions (Susan Edwards, Blaise, & Hammer, 2009)

While there is a problem with the influence of the developmental discourse upon the immediate setting, Esy argues that this problem is systemic, as the inability to accelerate the 'gifted' child is restricted by governmental regulations, which require education and care

centres to maintain particular ratios and group sizes. Regulatory practices are a technology of government which impact upon early childhood education, affecting the lived experiences of 'gifted' children, their families, and the teachers.

## Utilising Developmental Discourse to Inform Giftedness

As outlined within the Introduction chapter, developmental theory has influenced understandings of giftedness and gifted ability. The dominance of developmental discourses within the field of gifted education creates tensions with alignment of perceptions in the domain of early childhood education. The legacy of research into giftedness informed by developmental discourse (Terman, 1925), promotes the usage of developmental discourse in relation to understanding and describing giftedness. The primacy of the developmental discourse is buoyed by the value placed upon science and scientific research as a 'truth' within society, specifically with regards to making decisions about 'best practice' in education. Critiques of the developmental discourse within the field of early childhood education (Buchanan, 2011; Cannella, 1997; S. Peters & Kelly, 2011) challenge the dominance of the developmental discourse within research into giftedness. Developmental discursive language informs the respondents and participants definitions of giftedness. Many of the respondents utilise developmental discursive language to explicate their perceptions of giftedness. For example, when asked the goal of gifted education, many respondents replied using developmental terminology, such as

> *…at what ever level they need. (Respondent 5, Question 1)*

> *…providing the correct level of challenges for the child. (Respondent 13, Question 1)*

*...to provide education at a level to keep the student interested. (Respondent 18, Question 1).*

*...The goal of gifted education is to provide an educational programme at a suitable level and pace for the children involved. (Respondent 27, Question 1)*

The respondents' positioning of giftedness within a developmental discourse, constructs a discursive image of the gifted infant or toddler in relation to their 'advanced' abilities according to a normative progression of human development. These respondents argue that the gifted infant or toddler's abilities are above those expected from their age, consequently their learning experiences must be constructed according to higher stages within the normative scale.

Many respondents (some who position children within this developmental discourse) also positioned gifted infants and toddlers as 'individuals'. They argued their giftedness was contextually located but also within a normative scale of development. These respondents sought to promote a discursive image of the child as culturally and contextually located, arguing that family, culture and society impacts upon a definition of giftedness rather than a universal scale of development. The complexity in the negotiation between a developmental discourse and socio-cultural discourse is highlighted in these respondents. These respondents argue gifted infants and toddlers require individual programmes as their development is outside the normal scale of development; the developmental discourse informs their definition of giftedness. But the children's giftedness is contextually located, expression of gifted ability and definitions of what a gifted individual is are informed by social and cultural values. The description of gifted infants and toddlers as contextually located individuals was often in reference to the 'needs' of the gifted individual which are specific to this 'individual' and

cannot be assess according to normative scales of development. This gifted individual requires development of an individualised programme relative to their abilities.

Other respondents contest developmental discursive image altogether, arguing that all children have individual developmental trajectories, therefore a normative scale and any claims to 'advanced' ability as 'gifted' ability are redundant. These respondents contest the image of a gifted child, rejecting a developmental discourse and gifted discourse. The contesting discursive images supported by these respondents create tension between themselves and giftedness advocates, contesting the perception of giftedness within the field of early childhood education.

The participants within this study also negotiate between discourses of development. Elaras, Linda, Esy and Mina describe giftedness as being the development of ability at a faster rate than what is considered to be average development for the child's age. Elaras refers to developmental milestones, describing identification of giftedness as being guided by recognition that the child is reaching these milestones early, stating:

*...I would be talking about looking for the early readers, the early walkers, um, the early talkers, um, children who have go fine motor skills earlier than most...they are doing things earlier than other children. (Elaras, Interview, p.1)*

Additionally, Elaras explains that in her experience early childhood teachers refer to a developmental paradigm when discussing gifted children, stating "…they are going…'this child is doing it faster'" (Elaras, Interview, p.23). Elaras contends that a developmental discourse coupled with consideration of the child as an individual can aid identification of gifted children. In this view comparisons between children make their exceptionality visible but understanding of the individual contextually located child aids identification also. If teachers were focus only upon the child within the group, group learning situations instead of the individual limit opportunities for understanding children's gifted abilities. Elaras argues

that without consideration of the individual child opportunities for comparisons would be missed and so would the opportunity to recognise the child's gifted potential.

Developmental discourse informs Linda's explanation of gifted ability, stating gifted infants and toddlers "are taking these skills to a different level for the age they are at" (Linda, Interview, p.29). Additionally, Mina's concept of giftedness is informed by developmental discourse:

*...it is important to recognise that development of gifted children progresses at uneven rates in different areas of development, and it is often asynchronous development, their intellectual, social, emotional and physical development are at different stages. (Mina, Questionnaire, p.7)*

Mina refers to the rates of development, and the stages of different areas of development relevant to the individual, assuming the normative stance of synchronous development according to these stages. Mina contends that gifted development is not dominant within Aotearoa New Zealand practice, but still utilises a normative developmental frame to assess this ability.

Likewise, Esy describes giftedness to be "children who had exhibited some qualities or…characteristics that may be advanced for an age group" (Esy, Interview, p. 2). However, Esy demonstrates discomfort with using developmental discursive language in relation to gifted children's abilities, stating "if the child has shown that he could, he could, um, work much, how do I say that, ahead of our, of the other children" (Esy, Interview, p.18). Esy stutters when she is trying to express herself using developmental discursive language, and questions herself as to how she should articulate this point. Esy's unease with developmental discursive language is clearly evident. Comparative language informed by the developmental discourse, describing the gifted child as 'ahead', 'excelling' or 'advanced' implies the gifted child's relative position to other children within the group. Conversely, the other children are

positioned as 'behind', 'average' or 'standard', a position that contests the perception

maintained within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) that all children

are to be positioned as 'confident and competent'. The egalitarian discourse is invoked

through the developmental discourse. The discursive image of the gifted child as 'advanced'

is informed within both discourses. The egalitarian discourse rejects such notions of

advancement in favour of equity for all individuals.

Iri maintains that age-based assessments of learning are inappropriate to her practice,

contending that all children are included into the activities regardless of their age. This is

discussed in reference to the inquiry group that is in place in her education and care centre. Iri

explains "if the two year olds want to come up, you know, they are welcome to come, there is

no age restriction there" (Iri, Interview, p.8). Additionally, Iri does not utilise developmental

discursive language in her discussion of children's learning, instead describing learning

according to the child's individual abilities, rather than reference to age and stage based

understandings.

## Contesting Comparative Development: Promoting Individuality

The majority of the participants reject the discursive image of the child as a universally

definable subject, instead discursively constructing an image of the child as an individual and

individualised subject. Iri explains that within her education and care centre, children are each

considered on their own merit not in relation to standardised universal measures. Learning is

measured according to the progress made by the individual child in relation to his or her own

previous abilities rather than their progression through universal developmental stages. This

individualised approach to learning for children impacts upon Iri's consideration of the

concept of giftedness. Iri clearly outlines she does not utilise comparative language when

regarding children's abilities stating, "we probably wouldn't even say, compared to other

children, probably we wouldn't use that language" (Iri, Interview, p.7). Iri's perception that all children be considered as individuals informs Iri's perceptions regarding giftedness, as Iri asserts that consideration of children's gifted ability is unnecessary when children are assessed according to their own individual educational growth and abilities. In eliminating comparisons between children's abilities, each child is considered according to their own capabilities. Each child's capabilities are planned for according to where they are at, and what they need to extend them further. This perception is consistent with interpretations of *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) by Farquhar and Fleer (2007) who argue that the curriculum document is more about "valuing of difference, and cultural constructions of identity" (p. 32). Iri' s view is that individuality renders gifted 'labels' redundant; because every child is extended to meet their individual potential, measures which would designate a child's gifted ability through comparisons with other children or against a normative scale of development are defunct.

Conversely, Linda's perception differs to Iri's view that individual assessment renders giftedness redundant. In cases where teachers do not take the infant or toddlers gifted potential into consideration in their planning Linda asserts that a teacher's rejection of gifted ability "clouds the vision (of the teacher as) then they are not giving the child a holistic chance. They are diluting what is happening." (Linda, Interview, p.15). Linda perceives teachers' rejection of giftedness as dogmatic, an uninformed rejection of giftedness which is not founded upon considered reason. Linda contends that most teachers will reconsider once they have had the opportunity for a reasoned debate upon the merits of considering giftedness as an attribute of the child that should be considered, especially when she contests their dogmatic perceptions in relation to the requirement for each child to be considered according to an individualised holistic form of pedagogy. Linda contends that a thorough and responsive view of the learning of the gifted infant or toddler includes acceptance of their gifted ability

and a consideration of a conception of giftedness as a part of the child's culture. To reject this outright is to reduce understanding of where the child is at in relation to their family's views and understandings.

Correspondingly, Mina refers to the concept of holistic development in contesting the developmental discourse of *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) stating "I think we all view children holistically and…individually" (Mina, Interview, p. 22). Mina draws attention to the necessity to look at gifted infants and toddlers holistically, drawing analogy between holistic education and an individual approach. Additionally, Mina discusses the importance of addressing the educational needs of the gifted child relative to their individual abilities rather than in reference to a normative scale of development based upon age. Mina argues there is an association by many teachers between the needs of the child, with the behaviours of the child, however as these needs are often based upon a 'age based scale', gifted children become frustrated with the lack of stimulation, and resort to exhibiting negative behaviours. Mina argues that the teachers only see the negative behaviours, not the cause for the behaviours. When teachers do not understand that the negative behaviour is the expression of frustration of the individual infant or toddler's gifted ability, the child is constructed as "disruptive" (Mina, Interview, p.18), which limits the teacher's understanding of the reasons behind the negative behaviours, and the necessity for an individual learning programme to counter them. Teachers evaluate the child according to these negative behaviours, and position them as a disruptive' child rather than a 'bored child'. These two images that have vastly different actions for the child. A 'disruptive' image is associated with the child, interpretation of these behaviours which affects future interrelations with the other people in the environment, reifying this image. The evaluative authority of the teacher, and their privileged place as the expert within the setting reinforces this assessment for the

children within the setting, and the parents who defer to the teacher's for assessment of their child's abilities.

The promotion of individuality, a focus and reverence for the individuality of the subject within society is promoted within economic discourse within the neoliberal society. Individualisation is a central tenet of neoliberalism, with the promotion of the interests of the individual being of central importance to the maximisation of the benefits of the market upon society. The neoliberal view rests upon "an ideology of individualism as the most fundamental and unifying premise that emphasises individual responsibility within a free-market economy" (M. A. Peters, 2011, p. 31). All children are discursively positioned within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) through neoliberal discursive constructions which were prevalent at the time of its composition (Duhn, 2006). Situating the child as an individual, positioning a focus of early childhood education to be the promotion of the individual interests of the child is central to the construction of the future citizen who will be 'confident and competent' within the neoliberal society. Homo œconomicus (or subjects that are defined according to economic rationality, a grid of economic intelligibility) is a partner and reasoning behind, and the basic element of economic governmental rationality (Foucault, 2008b). The early childhood education system promotes relationships and consideration of the child in context within the wider world, however the promotion of individuality, of individualisation is equally present. Children are "affirmed as individuals" (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 16), individualisation of the child is tied into the subjectivity as a being of potential as "To learn and develop to their potential, children must be respected and valued as individuals" (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 40). This has implications for the child constructed in this fashion.

Many of the respondents in the community questionnaire position gifted infants and toddlers as individuals, and the goal of gifted education to enable these individuals to reach

their potential. Individualisation of the child, connected to the theory of human capital, defines the child according to the grid of economic intelligibility, and values a child in relation to their potential value as a contributing member of the future society. As argued previously, gifted children, who are already perceived as ahead of other children, are marginalised in favour of input into at risk children who will provide a greater return on the levels of input placed into their early education.

## Summary

There are significant tensions between the discourses that inform the exemplary practices of the participants. The interpretation of discourses maintained within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) which contest each other, and the dominant discourses within early childhood education and gifted education, serve to designate the field of gifted early childhood education as a contested, and disparate domain. Teacher perceptions and wider community perceptions of giftedness are varied and often fractious. Perceptions informed by a developmental discourse are contested by socio-cultural discourse, individual forms of development are challenged by universal theories. The construction of neoliberal image of the child within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) serves to normalise the individual view of the child, the child as a being of 'potential'. Developmental discourse is challenged within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) through the promotion of alternate discourses, indicating a movement away from a historic dominant developmental discourse towards the desire to situate learning according to the contextually located needs of the individual. However, this is not reflected in the perceptions of the participants within the study. The discourses within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) have influenced the discourses utilised by early childhood teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand, and the discursive images of the gifted infant and toddler, limiting

perceptions of ability, or relativizing children's abilities and interests down to the individual

level, making comparisons irrelevant or inappropriate.

The participants and respondents who support gifted education appear to equally

support individualistic, socio-culturally responsive teaching approaches to the education of

gifted infants and toddlers. However, the discursive language of developmental discourse,

universalist and constraining, informs understanding and definitions of giftedness and gifted

ability. These contesting educational discourses are not present within early childhood

teachers and respondents who do not support gifted education. There are tensions between the

supporters and non-supporters of gifted education. These tensions in relation to the findings

of this and the other findings chapters will be further discussed in the next chapter.

# Chapter Seven: Findings and Analysis 3: An Expert Discourse

## Introduction

Authorities of delimitation (Foucault, 2002) are identified by Foucault as domains of authority to demarcate areas of legitimate and forbidden behaviours within the discursive field. This authority is held by individuals who are considered to be legitimised within the discursive field through attainment of qualifications recognised as acceptable within the field; their adherence to the normative discourse of the field; and their work within the domain. These individuals are positioned as an authority, or expert and their discursive positioning of knowledge transmutes this knowledge into legitimate knowledge (Foucault, 2002).

Normative discourses are held within specific parameters, or margins of tolerance (Foucault, 2002) within the discursive field. Anything within or outside of these parameters are defined by the authoritative expert to be normal or deviant. The authority ascribed to the expert affords them the opportunity to create and/or reinforce normalisation of behaviours. Experts within the field of education are ascribed authority to define the parameters for what defines giftedness, or infancy or toddlerhood. Many of the participants within the study negotiate with an expert discourse, positioning themselves as learners, or sometimes as experts in relation to their abilities compared to others.

## The Participants' Subject Positions as an Expert

### Rejecting being positioned as an 'expert'.

Some of the participants question their 'expertise' in relation to their positioning as an exemplary teacher by the members of the wider community. Within the conversations had with the participants at the outset of the investigation, many contested their positioning as

exemplary, arguing they did not hold enough information regarding gifted education to be considered an 'expert'.

In Esy's education and care centre, there are more unqualified 'workers' working with the toddler group than qualified teachers, leading to a situation which Esy describes as "not really even manageable" (Esy, Interview, p. 23). Yet, Esy asserts that she does not consider herself sufficiently knowledgeable to lead the centre team in developing a concept of giftedness or gifted education for gifted infants and toddlers, arguing this should be the responsibility of 'experts' in the field of gifted education. She reasons this 'expert' opinion would hold more authority to promote a concept of giftedness than she could, which would influence policies and procedures within her centre. Esy explains there is a necessity for an expert to promote this concept to the team, explaining that she would not be considered by her team, nor would she consider herself, adequately informed to be considered an 'expert', stating:

> it would be really good if once there is something in place, there is someone who is…I
> say an expert, somebody who has the right knowledge who can inform that group, so
> that we have a common understanding. (Esy, Interview, p.17)

Despite Esy's positioning as an exemplary teacher for gifted infants and toddlers, she accepts a subject position which defers to other 'experts'. Esy's marginalises her expertise as a teacher of gifted toddlers, despite being considered to be exemplary as a teacher of gifted infants and toddlers by the wider community, and being one of the few qualified teachers within her team.

As there are more unqualified 'workers' than qualified teachers within Esy's section of the education and care centre, there are questions regarding the 'expert' discourse promoted by the management within this environment in relation to teacher qualifications. The majority of teachers within Esy's section of the education and care centre do not hold teaching

qualifications, promoting the image that these qualifications are not necessary to educate toddlers and potentially undermining the value of Esy's qualification. This could influence Esy's deferential subject position in relation to other 'experts' as, arguably, teacher qualifications are not valued by the centre management enough to promote all the workers to hold them. (this may be an effect of the neoliberal discourse, which will be discussed further within the next chapter). The discrepancy between Esy's subjectivity and the community's discursive image of Esy as a model of an exemplary teacher of gifted infants and toddlers demonstrates tensions in the discursive image of an expert within this domain.

Iri also contests of her status as an expert or example of exemplary practice in the field of gifted education. Iri positions herself as a learner explaining "I am still learning, I never say I have arrived" (Iri, Interview, p. 10), and responds that she neither knows what the goal of gifted education is, nor how children should be identified as gifted. Like Esy, there is a discrepancy between and the community's discursive image of Iri as a model of an exemplary teacher of for gifted infants and toddlers, and Iri's subjectivity within the expert discourse. Iri also rejects being positioned discursively as an 'expert' in gifted education, as she contests the concept of giftedness, engaging in an alternate discourse of giftedness.

Elaras queries the dominant discursive image of the teacher as an expert in the domain of education. In describing her experience working with a gifted child in her early years of teaching, Elaras explains "training to be a teacher didn't give me any tools to help me cater for [the gifted child]" (Elaras, Questionnaire, p. 2). Elaras problematises the notion that trained teachers are experts, querying this discourse by describing her own experience. Despite the legitimisation of her role as an educational 'expert' through the attainment of an education qualification, she considered herself unable to demonstrate expertise as a teacher for a child she considered to be gifted in her early years of teaching.

As outlined within the previous section, teacher expertise is of a high importance to the respondents within the gifted and early childhood communities, with many respondents contending that a positive view of giftedness informed by appropriate qualification and knowledge is one of the most important personal/professional attributes of a teacher working with gifted infants and toddlers. However, the participants who have been nominated as exemplary teachers in gifted education represent a paradox in this perception, as none hold extended qualifications in gifted education, and many do not claim to have sufficient expertise. There are problems with the notion of exemplary constructed by the community respondents and the characteristics of the teachers promoted as exemplary by these communities.

**'Expertise' and qualifications.**

By contesting the image of expert, the participants contest the position of the NZMoE which views the early childhood teacher as the expert within the early childhood setting, to be consulted by parents with questions on giftedness and gifted education (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2012c). The parameters of knowledge transmitted whilst studying for a teaching qualification are governed by legislation enforced by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). Legitimate knowledge within the domain of early childhood teacher education is determined by the NZQA through review and approval/rejection of initial teacher education programmes. In order to provide teacher education programmes, private providers are required to register, be approved and apply to be an accredited provider with the NZQA (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2013). As discussed within Chapter One: Background and outline of the topic, the 50% minimum qualified staffing levels create tensions in the consideration of 'expertise' within the domain of early childhood education. The image of the qualified teacher as 'expert' and the

unqualified staff member as equally employable within the early childhood setting impacts

upon the image of the teacher/expert within the domain of early childhood education.

As discussed above, authority and legitimacy are ascribed to teachers with appropriate

qualifications. Some respondents did not consider qualified teachers to have enough

knowledge to be considered an expert in gifted education, arguing "there is a need for training

across the education sector" (Respondent 27, Question 5). Likewise, the authoritative position

of the qualified teacher is contested by Elaras, who argues her "training to be a teacher didn't

give me any tools to help me cater for [a gifted child]" (Elaras, Questionnaire, p.2). Gifted

education content within teacher education programmes is incommensurate to the expert

position being attributed to the teacher. Linda, Mina and Elaras all have identified seeking out

more information on giftedness beyond initial teacher education. Iri and Esy assert they

wished to be involved in the study as they wanted to learn more about giftedness. Initial

teacher education is considered insufficient education regarding giftedness and gifted

education practice by the participants. Elaras reinforces this further when she states that

within current initial teacher education programmes, teachers are not being instructed upon

giftedness and gifted education. She argues teachers will only consider this a fault in the

programme if they have a view which supports giftedness. In Elaras' view, this is a lapse in

the teacher programme which affects teachers' approaches to gifted education upon

graduation. Elaras explains,

> *I think most of the teachers who actually are aware that…giftedness exists are aware*
>
> *that they don't have the tools that they need…there's no specific training…within the*
>
> *pre-service, and so once teachers are out in the workplace they're then looking, if*
>
> *they're aware, they're then looking for where to next. (Elaras, Interview, p.19)*

Elaras asserts the initial teacher education programmes do not provide enough information on

gifted education; teachers who are interested in gifted education need to undertake further

professional development to learn more. Furthermore, Elaras queries the expertise of a qualified teacher regarding giftedness and gifted education, as there is little or no education regarding giftedness and gifted education in initial teacher education. Initial teacher education programmes who do not educate teachers on giftedness render gifted children invisible, and normalise marginalisation of gifted children by teachers. Elaras contends the omission of this information is leading to teachers misinterpreting and misunderstanding gifted children's abilities. The NZQA approves qualifications which omit the education regarding a concept of giftedness, despite the NZMoE's positioning on the actuality of giftedness.

Within the neoliberal 'free market' education context of Aotearoa New Zealand, attainment of a teaching qualification is positioned as an individual endeavour. Individuals are required to pay to be enrolled in education programmes. To enrol in further education beyond the initial education programme will incur costs to the teachers, and only NZQA approved programmes are sanctioned to allow teachers to apply for financial assistance for teachers from Work and Income Services (WINZ) in the form of student loans to pay fees, and student allowances for living costs. Further opportunities for professional learning about giftedness and gifted education are minimal and may or may not be NZQA approved. Financial consideration must be given as any courses not NZQA approved will not be eligible for this assistance. This places limitations upon teacher's ability to engage in further professional learning. Despite the NZMoE asserting that all early childhood teachers can be approached by parents to provide more information on giftedness in early childhood education, the expertise of teachers who are fully qualified needs to be further augmented in order to attain more information on giftedness.

**The participants' subject position as an 'expert' and a common conception of giftedness.**

As outlined within Chapter One: Background and outline, contemporary giftedness research is " further than ever from developing a universally accepted definition of giftedness and talent" (Moltzen, 2011a, p. 31). Diverse concepts of giftedness are positioned by some researchers as beneficial in combating the dogmatic historical concepts of giftedness which have limited inclusion of particular abilities because they did not 'fit' the dominant discursive image of a gifted child (Ambrose, Sternberg, & Sriraman, 2012a). However the lack of a consistent shared concept of giftedness is identified by some of the participants as negatively impacting their practice and advocacy for those children they considered gifted. Mina draws attention to the negative impacts that contesting views of giftedness can have. Within the questionnaire, Mina outlines the experience of a gifted child whose teachers constructed an historical academic discursive image of gifted children, valuing academic achievement and compliance as the characteristics of gifted ability. This discursive construct was contested by the child and parents who maintained an image of their child as gifted, but not always achieving highly within tests. The contesting images impacted upon the child's behaviour within the education setting. Mina explains that as the child did not score highly on tests, they received less educational extension. This lack of educational extension affected the child, who then exhibited disruptive behaviour. The teachers then pointed to this behaviour as more evidence the child did not have gifted ability. Mina argues that due to the teachers' ignorance and intransigence on a concept of giftedness, there is significant challenge for parents of gifted children who maintain alternate discursive images of gifted ability. Mina refers to the power relations between teachers and parents as "parents often say '…I don't want to go and meet the teacher and say well my child is gifted" (Mina, Interview, p.33) as the teacher will not necessarily support the parents claims due to these contesting images. Mina is adamant that fault lies with the governance of teacher education programmes, as there is not sufficient

support for teachers to learn more about gifted abilities and develop understanding of alternate discursive images of gifted children. This is supported by a respondent to the community questionnaire who posits "to identify them as gifted is to constrain them within a structure/concept that is defined by society/government. I'd prefer to let them develop their gifts while developing their confidence and competence as learners" (Respondent 39, Question 6). The limited images of giftedness and gifted ability promoted within society and the governmental documentation serve to constrain giftedness to a highly controlled and regulated sphere of education, which may not reflect the diverse experiences of individuals.

Some of the participants also identify moments in their teaching where they felt other qualified teachers responded inappropriately to a child who they considered to be gifted because they did not share a common concept of giftedness. Elaras outlines an instance in which a teacher explained to her that a gifted child's abilities should be eventually caught up by the other children in the class, stating,

> *[I've met] a teacher who said…'if they say your child is reading three year's above, at the end of the year, some of the other children would have caught up, at the end of the two years, everybody would have caught up…so, it's okay.' But it's not, it's not okay. Because that child should have been making two year's progress in two years. (Elaras, Interview, p.22)*

Elaras expresses frustration that this teacher does not have the skills to recognise the gifted child should also advance in their abilities, not remain static. She contests this teachers' knowledge in gifted education, and positions herself as an 'expert' in relation to the other teacher. In constructing an image of the gifted child as temporarily advanced, this ability is conceptualised as a momentary advancement, which would not require long term consideration as giftedness nor intervention by teachers. A discursive image of giftedness is constructed which implies power relationships between teachers, parents and children.

Teachers, who are positioned as the 'expert' authority within the early childhood setting, disseminate this discursive image of giftedness, influencing parents and infants/toddlers.

Like Elaras, Linda adopts the position of an 'expert' in knowledge on giftedness in relation to other teachers. She contends that many teachers are lacking in knowledge about giftedness and gifted education, writing "I have met educators who can not (sic) make an accurate judgement based on lack of understanding or having the right skills to make identifications" (Linda, Questionnaire, p.4). Linda positions herself as an expert to those teachers, expanding and developing their understanding, stating "I feel like I have been an educator for those people too" (Linda, Interview, p.5). She later reiterates this in the interview, discussing how other teachers have questioned her on her assessment of an infant or toddlers potential for giftedness because "they didn't understand the rudiments of what I'd identified" (Linda, Interview, p.6). Hence, Linda considered that she needed to further explain and defend her position on assessing the child as having gifted potential because the other teachers were not conversant on gifted ability in infants and toddlers. Linda describes that she experienced interactions where teachers are keen to learn from her expertise, but there are other teachers who are reluctant to change their own perceptions. In these cases, Linda describes the other teachers' do not only have a lack of understanding, but a dogmatic reluctance to consider alternate or in some cases any discursive images of gifted children. She considers this inflexible unwillingness to even discuss giftedness is contrary to the construct of the teacher as a professional, stating:

> *I wouldn't say that sometimes they may roll their eyes, or tut, or um, not run with it, and that's quite acceptable for certain areas of life, but when it comes to children's education, it needs to be a considered, uh, sort of rebuke of what you've heard. You can't just say 'because I don't believe that it can't be true' you have be able to say*

*'okay right, I'm going to chew that over because if this is really going to help this child, then maybe I ought to be doing something proactive about it'.(Linda, Interview, pp7-8)*

Linda constructs an image of the teacher as a professional being, who engages in considered debate. This image is informed by/reifies the discursive professional language within the *Registered Teacher Criteria* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009) which requires trained, registered teachers to "critically examine their own beliefs, including cultural beliefs, and how they impact on their professional practice and the achievement of ākonga" (p.4). Linda asserts that the necessity for teachers to be open to a concept of giftedness is linked to the ability of the teacher accurately identify gifted potential within an infant or toddler, and to ensure that the child's learning needs are being appropriately extended. The teacher's role is to look at each child as an individual and to "acknowledge the difference in children" (Linda, Interview, p.3). Linda explains that the teacher needs to observe behaviours in the child, observe differing results for each child, and use this information to inform the future steps for the child's learning. In order to ensure all needs are being met for the child, to ensure the child is being viewed holistically, Linda argues the teacher must be flexible to other views regarding the child's education.

Also identifying a dogmatic refutation of a concept of giftedness, Elaras cites instances where teachers have rejected the concept of gifted ability outright. She describes a specific instance where she engaged with "(a) principal who said, 'in my forty odd years in teaching, I have never seen a gifted child'" (Elaras, Interview, p.19). Elaras argues that this principal either considers everyone or no-one to be gifted. His position of authority as a leader influences the dominant discursive image of giftedness within the community setting, limiting the available subject positions for the children within the educational setting. However questions can be raised regarding the dogmatic promotions of the image of a gifted child without consideration of dogmatism in gifted education (Ambrose et al., 2012b).

# Qualifications, Authority and Legitimate Knowledge

**The identification of giftedness.**

Expertise in gifted education was frequently associated with the authority and knowledge to identify giftedness. The respondents to the community questionnaire held divergent opinions on who holds sufficient knowledge, expertise and authority to identify gifted infants and toddlers. Some of the respondents clearly stated that parents should be the first, foremost and sometimes sole identifier of gifted ability,

> *Parents in the first instance however as this is often missed then early childhood providers. (Respondent 4, Question 5)*

> *Parents often know if a child is gifted.  the problem they face is convincing other people. (Respondent 27, Question 5)*

> *Families. (Respondent 37, Question 5)*

> *The parents should take the lead role in identifying if their child is gifted. (Respondent 45, Question 5)*

However, expertise of the extended family in relation to identification of giftedness is marginalised through the expert discourse; Elaras explains formalised identification procedures through a trained psychologist are valued over the perceptions of the family. Many respondents contest the primacy placed upon the formal identification procedures, instead arguing the lead place the family and parents should take within the identification of a

gifted infant or toddler, stating "Parents often know if a child is gifted…the problem they face is convincing other people" (Respondent 27, Question 5).

Conversely, some of the respondents argued that parents would not be best identifiers,

*Parents often don't know that there is anything out of the ordinary - esp [sic] if this is their first child. They may not realise, esp [sic] if they, themselves, are gifted and see that as the norm. (Respondent 23, Question 5)*

*Parents are often the first to notice there is something different about their child, but at the same time the behaviors [sic] could just be considered "normal" for their child or family. (Respondent 14, Question 5)*

*Parents may, but often miss it since they have less opportunity for direct comparisons allowing them to realise their child is not average. (Respondent 36, Question 5)*

Consequently while some respondents considered parents to be the best identifiers of giftedness within their children due to their intimate knowledge of the child, some respondents contended that parents would consider the child's exemplary abilities as 'normal', especially if these are familial characteristics, and miss the child's potential giftedness. There is tension in the positioning of the parent as the 'expert' assessor of 'giftedness. In questioning the 'expertise' of the parent to identify giftedness in their child, the authority of the parent as the 'expert' is contested, and any claims of legitimacy in their assessment of their child's giftedness brought into question.

Other respondents maintained that the correct person to identify a gifted infant or toddler must hold appropriate qualifications to do so,

*[A]ssessment by appropriately trained 'experts. (Respondent 7, Question 5)*

*gifted professionals. (Respondent 5, Question 5)*

*[N]ot teachers psychologists are the only experts that diagnose children as gifted. (Respondent 10, Question 5)*

*Educational psychologist. (Respondent 18, Question 5)*

*I think informed, knowledgeable early years teachers should be taking the lead. They see a wide range of children and, if trained, should be able to 'spot' characteristics that will alert them. (Respondent 23, Question 5)*

*Health professionals. (Respondent 25, Question 5)*

*Somebody who knows what they are doing and has been trained. Given that many primary and secondary school teachers are still very unclear on giftedness, I doubt that pre-school teachers are any clearer. There is a need for training across the education sector…Psychologists' assessments are ideal, but expensive. (Respondent 27, Question 5)*

*I believe qualified preschool teachers would be a part of the identification process, along with family. (Respondent 34, Question 5)*

*As Plunket nurses and medical staff are sure to see very young infants this could be the first identification. Children who are in ECE care have the additional professional opinion of teachers and caregivers in centres. (Respondent 38, Question 5)*

The majority of the respondents maintain the dominant discursive image of the expert as an individual who holds legitimate qualifications. Interestingly, there is some discrepancy between the qualified teacher and the qualified psychologist as the legitimate individual to identify giftedness. Some respondents accept the qualifications, and the experience an early childhood teacher has with a wide variety of children, as sufficient knowledge and authority to identify exceptionality in an infant or toddler. Others value the psychologist over the teacher, contesting the understanding of the teacher regarding giftedness due to the lack of information supplied within the teachers' education programme. Some of the respondents clearly reject the legitimacy of the qualified teacher as an expert in gifted education, and favour trained psychologists instead.

The discursive image of the qualified psychologist as the 'expert' is maintained by some of the participants also. Elaras asserts there is prestige attributed to psychologists as 'experts' by others within the community in the identification procedures of giftedness. In order to negotiate within these normative boundaries, Elaras explains that assessment by an expert is necessary to convince the wider community of a child's gifted ability. So although Elaras expresses that identification can be undertaken by "anyone with knowledge about giftedness" (Elaras, Questionnaire, p. 2), she acknowledges that formalised testing is necessary to endow credibility, stating

*formalised testing proves to people…(gifted children)…belong here because they have been formally assessed by an internationally recognised standardised test…So formalised testing is, is for everybody else, it's not necessarily for the child or the family, or even for us, but it's certainly for, um, for the others. (Elaras, Interview, p.31)*

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Credibility of the psychologist is reflected within the community questionnaire. Some respondents contend that only trained psychologists are able to assess gifted ability, stating "not teachers psychologists are the only experts that diagnose children as gifted" (Respondent 10, Question 5), and "Psychologists' assessments are ideal" (Respondent 27, Question 5).

The dominance of an expert discourse within the wider community is also expressed by Mina, who explains "sometimes you have to label (a child as gifted)…to actually put that information across and explain why those things…are happening with children (Mina, Interview, p.29). Tensions between the status of the teacher as the educational expert, and the psychologist as a behavioural expert converge in the identification of a gifted infant or toddler. The domain of teachers' expertise is demarcated; psychologists are ascribed authority to assess gifted ability, delimiting the authority of the teacher. The authority of the psychologist legitimises or forbids the child's claim to gifted ability, a claim that is reinforced by historic discursive views of the psychologist as the expert in the identification of giftedness (Terman, 1925). Scientific discursive images of the gifted child, who must be empirically measured and assessed, enforce the role of the trained psychologist as the expert to conduct this assessment. (Gottfried, Gottfried, & Guerin, 2006) Yet as reflects the fractious nature of gifted research, many studies also argue against the positioning of the psychologist as the expert in gifted education identification (Beceren, 2010; BesanÇon, Lubart, & Barbot, 2013; Brown et al., 2005; Calero, Belen, & Robles, 2011). The authority of the early childhood teacher is further tempered by the historical discursive positioning of the education and care centre as a women's domain which was guided by scientific experts, such as Dr Truby King, whom despite no experience with young children and basing his approach upon his work with calves, was afforded prominence due to his scientific expertise. Dominant discourse promoting the axiomatic quality of scientific knowledge denotes authority to the

individuals, such as the trained psychologist, within the scientific domain and reduces consideration of the teacher's expertise in relation to assessment of giftedness.

The expertise of the psychologists is also challenged by Mina who interrogates the legitimacy of their assessments by questioning the how their limited exposure to the children they are assessing can ensure an accurate representation of the child's abilities. Mina argues this limited time-frame results in erroneous judgments of the child's potential giftedness, stating:

> *the assessors up there weren't agreeing (with our view that the child was gifted) just from seeing the child on the odd day, and at odd times and that is very difficult. (Mina, Interview, p.6).*

The legitimisation of the expert and the authority attributed to them is unsettled by this experience. Mina found that later the child was assessed as gifted, but only after the experts engaged with the child more. As these assessors were unable to accurately assess the child's abilities due to their infrequent visits, Mina rejects the expert discourse, and argues teachers who engage with the child more frequently will be able to assess the child's abilities accurately. Mina also expresses that the identification of the child as gifted by the psychological expert serves to legitimise the parent's claim of their child's abilities, but has a negative effect through the negative discourses associated with giftedness by the wider community.

**Authority of qualified teachers.**

Teacher expertise is of high importance to the respondents within the gifted and early childhood communities. Many respondents undertake a view that giftedness is specific domain of knowledge and understanding within educational practice, and assert one of the

most important personal/professional attributes of a teacher working with gifted infants and toddlers is their knowledge of gifted ability and qualifications to inform this knowledge. A few examples of these responses are listed below:

> *Teachers should have post-graduate studies in child education and child psyhology [sic] in order to understand the child and help develop his/her skills. (Respondent 3, Question 9)*

> *Professional development and interested teachers who are Keen to upskill and development a better understanding of children with specific needs. (Respondent 10, Question 9)*

> *Knowledge of gifted children, awareness of their needs. (Respondent 22, Question 9)*

> *A thorough understanding of giftedness. (Respondent 27, Question 9)*

> *preferably some experience or professional knowledge about giftedness. (Respondent 33, Question 9)*

The respondents promote the view that giftedness should be understood by teachers who engage with gifted infants and toddlers. Interestingly, the respondents who assert the need for exemplary teachers to have qualifications and extensive knowledge about giftedness also contended trained professionals should be involved in identification procedures for gifted children. These respondents engage in an expert discourse, attributing authority to individuals who hold socially valued qualifications within the educational/psychological domain.

The expert status accredited to qualified teachers is doubted by some of the participants in the study. Elaras questions the expert status accredited to qualified teachers by explaining "some of my best teachers haven't had that training" (Elaras, Interview, p.34). Elaras claims the expert discourse by explaining that she wishes all teachers could have training, but also rejects the dominance of the expert discourse by promoting the value of other attributes, such as empathy and understanding of the child. Additionally, Elaras queries whether a teaching qualification can replace a "wider view of the world" (Elaras, Interview, p.34) which she argues some young qualified teachers do not have. The discursive image of the qualified teacher as an expert is dominant within the present regulatory system where qualifications are linked to government funding (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2014b). However, as the minimum number of qualified teachers are limited to 50%, untrained teachers are considered to have sufficient expertise to be employed as early childhood teachers, but arguably may not be considered 'experts'. The authority attributed to a teaching qualification is diminished when an unqualified person can be employed in the same position within the domain of early childhood education. By positioning unqualified teachers as suitable to teach within early childhood centres, the government is creating tension in the position of qualified teacher as 'expert'. By regulating for half of the teachers within an early childhood centre to be unqualified, the image of the teacher as an expert within the domain of early childhood education is brought into question.

Esy explains that due to a lack of trained teachers within her setting, there are tensions in interpreting curriculum for gifted toddlers. Esy argues that it's not necessarily about the qualifications, but the knowledge that the qualifications has engendered in herself and the other trained teacher within her team. She contests that her and this other trained teacher have a shared understanding of the means in which to interpret curriculum for gifted and all toddlers, stating,

*I am not saying it is just because we are qualified that…we are capable, what I trying to say is, at least we have the same understanding of how to…go and provide a varied meaningful programme for the children. (Esy, Interview, p.11)*

Esy contests the expert discourse by attributing qualified teachers expert status, but arguing it is not the qualification, but the time spent building an understanding of early childhood pedagogy and philosophy. She argues unqualified teachers are lacking sufficient knowledge due to the limited time they are able to spend on building these understandings within professional development courses, limiting any opportunity to be considered 'experts'. Esy considers professional development opportunities to be limited, and insufficient to address this discrepancy. In this respect, Esy considers herself to be an expert in comparison to the unqualified teachers in her team.

The expert status attributed to qualified teachers by the parents within the education and care centre can affect the available subject positions to the potentially gifted infant or toddler. Iri explains that the parents within her centre are "well-educated" (Iri, Interview, p. 5), but as discussed earlier sometimes they will not volunteer their opinion on their child's potential giftedness, they will wait for the teachers to confer their expert view instead. Iri explains that they will talk to the parents about their child's exceptionality and ensure that the child is stimulated further within the education and care centre, but even if a child is identified as being gifted "we probably wouldn't be doing anything different…it probably wouldn't make a lot of difference to our practice, because…we see them as confident and competent" (Iri, Interview, p.6). Parents positioning the teacher as the expert will be deferring to their judgement on educational matters for their children. Iri does not engage in a discourse of giftedness instead employing a 'confident and competent' discourse, consequently her expert status demarcates the normative positioning of these discourses, normalising 'confident and competent'. Tensions between these discourses affect the parents whose engagement in a

giftedness discourse impacts their children's developing subjectivities, and the children themselves who are claimed by one discourse in the home environment, and engaging in another in the education and care centre. The expert status conferred to the teacher validates their discourse as legitimate knowledge, imbuing power and marginalising alternate discourses.

## Summary

The participants negotiate with an expert discourse in their practice within the domain of early childhood education. Their adoption or rejection of the expert discourse makes certain subject positions available to them, participants adopt or reject the position of an 'expert' relative to their perception of the other individuals they are being compared to and the specific area of expertise. Many of the participants did not consider their nomination as an exemplary teacher in gifted education to be sufficient to position themselves as an expert, instead citing their lack of knowledge and desire to learn more. By not considering their experience and positioning as sufficient expertise, nor their nomination by the gifted/early childhood community as an expert in gifted education as evidence of their expertise, the participants conform to the dominant discourse which only ascribes authority to individuals who have attained legitimate qualifications for a specific field of knowledge. This is problematised by the lack of sufficient education for teachers who wish to seek more information on gifted education, as discussed in the previous chapter, for without legitimate forms of education, how can the teachers develop expertise to position themselves as an 'expert'?

There is a strong dichotomy in the respondents' questionnaire responses between the necessity for an expert – often a psychologist – and the expertise of the parents/family in knowing their gifted infant and toddler best. The tension between an expert assessment

originating from an individual who may not know the child very well, and the inexpert but intimately knowledgeable family member, illustrates the engagement within the expert discourse, and the promotion of an alternate discourse which values localized experiential knowledge of the gifted infant/toddler over general domain knowledge. Despite this alternate discursive positioning of the expert psychologist, participants were resigned to the dominance of the expert discourse in the community, and the necessity to engage the expert to be considered legitimate by the wider community. In this way, the participants are constricted by the expert discourse, and gifted infants and toddlers subject positions are limited to the assessments of these 'experts'. The assessment of these experts constructs legitimised images of giftedness and gifted infants and toddlers. These constructs are normalised within the society by the participants continuing to engage in formal assessment procedures by these experts.

# Chapter Eight: Findings and Analysis 4: An Economic Discourse and a Neoliberal Approach to Governance of Education

## Introduction

Neoliberalism is concerned with "taking the formal principles of a market economy and referring and relating them to, of projecting them on to a general art of government"(Foucault, 2008c, p. 131). Neoliberalism positions economic principles as the guidelines for correct governance, promoting a dominant economic discourse. The economic discourse according to a neoliberal paradigm of governance engages in "the analysis of internal rationality, the strategic programming of individuals' activity" (Foucault, 2008c, p. 223). The economic discourse values "a society made up of enterprise-units [as]…its programming for the rationalization of a society and an economy" (Foucault, 2008, p. 225).

"[P]rivatised social policy" (Foucault, 2008c, p. 145) is undertaken by a government who engages and promotes an economic discourse. The privatisation of early childhood services by the government of Aotearoa New Zealand promotes economic sensibilities as the optimum governance. Early childhood centres are encouraged to consider "the long-term health and prosperity of the service…risk management…stakeholder reporting" (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2014a). Economic discursive language is normalised within the early childhood domain. Teachers and managers of early childhood services negotiate within this neoliberal paradigm of governance, and implement economic discursive practices in their governance of the early childhood environment. Parents are positioned as consumers, and early childhood education as a product for consumption.

Foucault (2008) asserts that according to the tenets of neoliberalism "government is active, vigilant, and intervening" (p.133). Within Aotearoa New Zealand, governmental technologies intervene in early childhood practice to promote the neoliberal paradigm of

governance as the 'truthful' means of governance, or as the "only realistic and desirable way forward" (Roberts, 2005, p. 455), despite being considered a fatalistic discourse which denies individuals opportunities for alternate conceptions for living (Roberts, 2005). Active governmental discursive practices determine: funding; staffing; and designation of spaces. These are disciplinarily enforced through the *Early Childhood Funding Handbook* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2014b), the *Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008* (New Zealand Government, 2008) and the *Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Centres 2008* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2008). These regulatory practices intervene on the conditions of the market in order to "encourage the…tendencies (of the market) and somehow push them to their limit and full reality" (Foucault, 2008c, p. 138), promoting competition between educational services to gain a greater share of the market, and the subsequent profits. Regulatory practice is integral to neoliberalism, as government is positioned as "active, vigilant, and intervening" (Foucault, 2008, p.133).

Within this assertion of a neoliberal paradigm of governance within Aotearoa New Zealand is a sensitivity to the characterisation of a 'Third Way' governmentality, a governmentality which engages in a "hybrid discourse insinuating the economic into the democratic and vice versa" (Roberts & Peters, 2008, p. 31). Enacting a 'third way' form of governmentality, the state devolves responsibility for the ownership of traditional 'state services' such as education, instead enforcing regulations to moderate the market (Roberts & Peters, 2008). A co-production of public goods is assumed, requiring individuals to be involved within the provision of the service which is made accessible by the state. Access to educational opportunities is provided, but the quality of provision is the shared responsibility of the individuals responsible for the service.

Quality education is considered to be the marketable factor influencing parent/consumer choices for a particular service (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2014a). However the provision of quality education is tempered by the implied responsibility of the private providers in accordance with 'third way' governmentality (Roberts & Peters, 2008) and limited governmental funding for quality standards. These factors influence private providers' ability and desire to supply the discursively constructed 'quality educational product'. Parental awareness of quality indicators when making their choice of education and care centre can be limited by reduced levels of quality within local services, limiting parents' ability to make a quality-based selection in their choice of education and care centre.

Tensions in the participants' perception of their status as an exemplary teacher for gifted infants and toddlers arose in relation to the dominant economic discourse. Participants' link their capability and capacity for effective practice with the financial position of their centre, by way of access to additional resources and external support to extend gifted infants and toddlers. Respondents also engage in an economic discourse, valuing physical and human resources in the education of gifted children. Other economic considerations are also normalised within the early childhood domain, such as qualified/unqualified teacher-child ratios and resources for children. These will be discussed further below.

## Early Childhood Education as Privatised Social Policy: Resourcing Education for Gifted Infants and Toddlers

Early childhood education within Aotearoa New Zealand is regulated to promote the mechanisms of competition. The historical origins of early childhood education as the concern of more affluent members of society are replicated within contemporary society, as the private market owners gain profits from their ownership of education and care centres. Historical discursive positioning of early childhood education as a social-good is contested by

the rationalities of the contemporary neoliberal government. The contemporary government positions early childhood education as a marketable product which should be regulated, promoting competition in order to stimulate the national economy. The current governmental position argues "since the choice to have children [is] a personal one, educating them [is] a private responsibility (Te One, 2013, p. 9).

From a legislative standpoint, participation in early childhood education and care in Aotearoa New Zealand is a voluntary undertaking for parents of children under the age of 6 (New Zealand Government, 1989). Consequently, education of children before school age is not legally required by the state. Yet there are tensions between the legislative position of voluntary participation in early childhood education, and the discursive normalisation of a near-necessary involvement for all children to participate in order to "get ahead and make the most of their lives" (National Party of New Zealand, 2014b, p. 1). Contemporary governmental apparatuses maintain historical discursive images of early childhood education as a social good through rhetoric (National Party of New Zealand, 2014b) and promotion of the necessity of participation by 'vulnerable' groups to correct social inequities (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2014d). Additionally, as discussed in Chapter Five, early childhood education is discursively constructed to be an investment into the future in the form of 'human capital' (White & Friendly, 2012). Education and knowledge invoke and imply one another within the neoliberal discourse of the 'knowledge economy' (Roberts, 2004) in which knowledge is a form of intellectual capital (Roberts & Peters, 2008). However, these discursive images of the positive role and impact of the education and care centre within society is contested by historic discursive positioning of the role of education of the infant and toddler as a mother's concern. Full economic support of the early childhood educational domain is tempered by the consideration that education of very young children is the private responsibility of the family, consequently despite discursive language promoting the necessity

and social good of early childhood education, economic support for participation is limited to children over the age of 3 (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2015a)

The governance of early childhood education is informed by an economic discourse. Early childhood education is positioned by the government as "privatised social policy" (Foucault, 2008c, p. 145). As contingent of the neoliberal paradigm of governance, the government supports the growth of the market through regulatory practices and governmental apparatuses, such as *Targeted Assistance for Participation*(New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2014i) and *Engaging Priority Families* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2014j). As the increased level of participation increases, the market for early childhood grows, enabling more opportunities for private providers to profit from early childhood education.

Governmental policy of early childhood centres also encourages competition between services through a free market approach to governance. Education and care services are not subject to zoning; parents are able to take their children to any education and care centre they choose. Consequently advertising to consumer/parents reinforces dominant discursive language, positioning early childhood education as beneficial/necessary for children's long term best interests, stating that early childhood education is "giving them the best opportunity to succeed in life and in future formal education" (Kindercare, 2014). Education is presented as a commodity, "something to be sold, traded and consumed" (Roberts, 2007, p. 351). Marketing for early childhood education also places primacy upon the expertise of the trained teachers, drawing upon the scientific discourse private providers advertise the benefits of early childhood education to parents with statements like: "research shows that preschool teachers with degrees offer high quality learning experiences for children" (Kidicorp, 2014). This marketisation positions teachers as experts in education for young children.

What does this mean for gifted infants and toddlers who participate within early childhood education? Teachers are promoted as the experts in educational practice displacing the role of the parents as educators; additionally the idealised benefits of early childhood education in extending children's learning capacity are marketed by the government. However as outlined in the previous chapter, the participants queried being positioned as an 'exemplary teacher' or an 'expert'. Within this chapter, the participants contest the likelihood of 'quality' education for gifted infants and toddlers when market sensibilities guide governance of early childhood education, and economic discursive practice rationalise policies and practices within the educational domain.

Esy cites instances when there have been limitations placed upon educational resources in her centre based upon claims by management that there were limited funds to purchase resources. Esy struggles with how economic rationality affects her ability to effectively extend gifted infants and toddlers. She explains that the management of the education and care centre argued there was little money to put into resourcing as there were few children attending the service. Esy was concerned that there were limited resources to extend children's learning in the centre, stating,

> *it was really challenging…there is not enough for us to use, although they (the management) said, be resourceful, be resourceful. (Esy, Interview, p 9)*

Additionally, Esy explains that resources were also limited when the education and care centre was a newly established business, as they started out with few resources for the teachers to utilise with the children. She argues that the educational needs of gifted children who required extension activities were marginalised due to this lack of adequate resources. Management expected Esy to be 'resourceful' and take responsibility for the quality of education provision within the service. This is characteristic of the 'third way' form of governmentality (Roberts & Peters, 2008) outlined earlier, in which a co-production of public

goods is assumed, requiring individuals to be equally responsible for the provision of quality in the service. Quality education for gifted infants and toddlers is in tension with an economic discourse/neoliberal paradigm of governance which, in Esy's experience, places limitations upon access to resources, and increases expectations upon her personal provision of resources.

Governance of the majority of education and care centres within Aotearoa New Zealand are of private concern (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2014e). Distribution and governance/management of these education and care centres are the responsibility of private individuals and corporations/organisations. Economic discourse informs this private enterprise. This discourse is then reified by the managers of centres, in this case Esy's managers who argued there was not the revenue to provide more resources and activities for the teachers to use with the children. Economic principles inform the rationalisation of the lack of resourcing, but Esy contests this discursive position, and argues the lack of resources impinges upon her effective teaching practice for gifted infants and toddlers. She also contests there being the opportunities for sufficient resources, as despite higher numbers of children attending the education and care centre, there is still not an adequate level of resources to extend gifted children, stating,

> *…we utilise as much as we can, and our centre has gone through a lot of…changes in the environment, from....nothing to something…I started really early at (name of centre)..and definitely we have much more to provide the children now…we've got a healthy roll, and then…we've got resources. I wouldn't say it's enough or it's the best, but we've got resources. (Esy, Interview, pp.9-10)*

Despite an increase in the numbers of children attending, Esy queries the levels of resources within the environment as she feels it is still at an inadequate level.

Resourcing for gifted children was identified by many respondents as a crucial aspect of extension within the early childhood environment, necessary to "maximize their learning opportunities" (Respondent 14, Question 1) and ensure the gifted child can "dvelop [sic] as individuals as fully as possible" (Respondent 10, Question 1). The respondents identified the necessity for specific material resources that would enhance learning for gifted infants and toddlers relevant to the interests and needs expressed by the individual, stating:

*...books in topics they enjoy, provide stories at a suitable level, difficult puzzles. (Respondent 3, Question 8)*

*...reading material, writing implements, hands on equipment etc. (Respondent 8, Question 8)*

*...where appropriate, offered higher level toys/problems. (Respondent 18, Question 8)*

One respondent goes so far as to state "These kids teach themselves - they just need resources" (Respondent 26, Question 5). One of the respondents commented that the early childhood setting where her child attended sourced additional resources to extend the child's learning, stating:

*My older child's kindy brought readers they would normally take home year 2, as that was the level he needed extending too. (Respondent 12, Question 9)*

The allocation of funds towards centre running costs or private gain is determined by the status of the education and care centre as private (for profit) or community based (not for profit). Many kindergartens are community based organisations which channel surplus funds back into the organisation. In this case surplus funds have been utilised to extend the learning for a gifted toddler. The status of the educational service (profit/not for profit) directly relates

to the quality of the service, with not for profit providers more likely to produce higher levels of quality (P. Moss, 2009).

Linda also acclaims the importance of appropriate resources in extending a gifted infant or toddlers' learning. Linda explains that resourcing is particularly important for pre-verbal gifted infants, as the resources will enable these children to exhibit their gifted abilities, stating:

> *especially thinking for infants whose um language may be still quite, you know, excuse me, infantile, but…they may not be able to express themselves wholly through language, they may need to show you through materials and resources. (Linda, Interview, p.4)*

Linda argues that a wide variety of materials and resources allow the gifted infant or toddler the opportunity to express their gifted potential as they come in contact with a resource which maximises their ability. Linda explains "I think that being able to get your hands on something that extends what you've seen generally means resources for early childhood" (Linda, Interview, p.5). However, as outlined earlier by Esy, market rationalities impact upon the access to adequate resourcing for educational practice. The community and teachers' perceptions of exemplary practice for gifted infants and toddlers value appropriate additional resources and high levels of resourcing for gifted infants and toddlers. Yet this practice is limited by the market positioning of early childhood education.

The respondents also identify human resources to be important. Respondents explicate the importance of investing into the teacher's knowledge with professional development opportunities, and the value of pre-service training in gifted education stating:

> *…support student teachers to work with these children while they are on practicum and when they graduated / to provide PDs. (Respondent 16, Question 2)*

*Professional development and interested teachers who are Keen to upskill and*

*development a better understanding of children with specific needs. (Respondent 10,*

*Question 10)*

*...get PDs for teachers. (Respondent 16, Question 9)*

One respondent challenges the individualistic perspectives of the neoliberal paradigm,

arguing professional development opportunities should not be the responsibility of the

individual but of the management themselves, stating:

*...I also believe that a centre should make sure the educators have the skills themselves*

*to understand and better provide opportunities for the child. (Respondent 32, Question*

*9)*

As with Esy who considers it the obligation of the centre management to lead the direction in

gifted education, this respondent places responsibility upon the centre to imbue the teacher

with the necessary skills for facilitating gifted education. This perspective challenges the

dominant neoliberal economic discourse as it challenges the onus upon the individual's

"capital-ability" (Foucault, 2008c, p. 225), shifting responsibility for the individual's skills

from the worker to the employer. Instead of teachers being an enterprise unto themselves, the

employer takes responsibility for the skills and abilities of their workers.

For all education and care centres, access to revenue to source resources is from both

parents and the government. Parental fess are augmented by governmental subsidises. As Esy

points out, governmental funding of early childhood centres in Aotearoa New Zealand is

upon a 'per-child' basis (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2014b). Education and care

centres whose attendance numbers are low, or decline will receive less monetary support

from the government. Regulatory influence upon the education and care centre is maintained irrespective of the numbers of children in attendance, however external funding is reduced as attendance declines. If an early childhood centre is 'failing' the neoliberal economic discursive position is to allow this enterprise to fail, making room for more successful enterprises, despite the repercussions upon the life of the children. The principles of neoliberal governance determines government must not intervene within this economic failure, "[n]or must neo-liberalism, or neo-liberal government, correct the destructive effects of the market on society" (Foucault, 2008c, p. 145). As described by Esy, while the early childhood centre is in decline, the children within the setting suffer the consequences. The destructive effects of this economic failure affect the education of gifted infants and toddlers, and cannot be reproduced as the children's lived experiences cannot be duplicated or reversed.

An economic discourse also informs Mina's perception of her education and care centre. Mina's centre is a community not-for-profit centre, consequently the management of her centre are governed by the Charities Act (New Zealand Government, 2005) which restricts the management from benefitting from a personal profit from the service. Instead, surplus revenue is required to be channelled into growing and resourcing the service. Mina explains that in her view her centre these surplus funds have been utilised to extend the learning for a gifted toddler stating:

> *...the other thing that we are very very fortunate…with our management…the centre is paying for the support worker, three hours a week, because we couldn't get the um, Ministry of Education to come and visit yet (laughs). Um, so from that perspective, um, we are very very fortunate. (Mina, Interview, p.21)*

There are two points within this excerpt that I would like to address. Firstly, Mina describes herself as 'fortunate' that within her education and care centre, management who do not seek

to generate a profit for personal use from the revenue produced by the centre. The dominance of the neoliberal paradigm in positioning education and care centres as businesses for private profit is highlighted here. Moss (2009) asserts that for profit centres are the growth industry, whereas not for profit centres are in decline as a direct result of the market-driven approach to early childhood education and care. Funding from the government is provided to for profit and not for profit centres alike. Mina recognises that her experience is 'fortunate', rather than dominant practice. While Mina's centre is not governed to promote private economic gain, Mina displays consciousness of the impact of this approach upon other education and care centres, and considers herself fortunate.

Secondly, Mina addresses that this support worker for the gifted child was employed as "we couldn't get the Ministry of Education to come and visit us yet" (Mina, Interview, p.21). A lack of governmental support for gifted children in early childhood is also identified by Elaras, who recognises the difficulties for parents of infants and toddlers who think their child may be gifted to find support for their child stating:

> *Often parents go looking for help while their child is still a pre-schooler. They have a child who is 'different' and they are not sure where to go for help and how to cater for their child without help. Often programmes at school don't start until year 4. Children are often needing extension and enrichment well before this. (Elaras, Questionnaire, and p.2)*

For Elaras, gifted education programmes supported by governmental funding needs redress. The state intervenes to regulate in order "to allow the well-being, the interest of each to adjust itself in such a way that it can actually serve all" (Foucault, 2009, p. 447). According to Elaras, the well-being of gifted infants and toddlers would benefit from regulations promoting specialised education provision within the domain of early childhood education, legislatively requiring private providers to address gifted education within the education and care centre.

Foucault explicates governmentality to be "the tactics of government that allow the continual definition of what should or should not fall within the state's domain, what is public and what private" (Foucault, 2009, p. 145). The negotiation of the public and private status of the domain of early childhood is in continual flux. As argued earlier within this chapter, the early childhood centre is a privatised domain, but is still considered to be of public interest due to its position as a vehicle for social good. These contesting positions impact upon the interpretation of the level of public funding that should be applied to support gifted education within the domain of early childhood education. As outlined within Chapter One there is a discrepancy between the provision of information and support for gifted education between the early childhood and school sectors. I contend that the allocation of governmental funding is impeded by the tension between the location of the education and care centre as a public or private space.

## Early Childhood Education as Privatised Social Policy: Teacher Qualifications and Ratios

**Qualifications of a teacher working with gifted infants and toddlers.**

Governmental policies and regulations controlling the early childhood domain promote the market approach to early childhood education. Appropriate ratios of qualified early childhood teachers to numbers of children are maintained by regulatory legislation (New Zealand Government, 2008). As discussed within the previous chapter, there are problems with the lack of discernment between a qualified teacher and an unqualified 'worker' in relation to the expertise required to teach in an early childhood setting. It is important to discuss the effects of neoliberalism upon the economic considerations of 'expertise' within the education and care centre.

Esy does not position herself as an expert in gifted education, on the contrary, Esy wanted to be a part of this study because she wants to know more about giftedness and gifted education. However, in comparison to the other teachers within her education and care centre, specifically the unqualified workers, Esy positions herself as having higher levels of expertise in understanding and enacting pedagogical practice for gifted infants and toddlers, and argues the high numbers of unqualified teachers within her setting impact upon her implementation of exemplary practice for gifted infants and toddlers'. She contests legislation which promotes minimum levels of qualified teachers in the early childhood education and care centre, as in her view the workers lack of a qualification is responsible for their a lack of comprehension of the 'gifted' child, stating,

> *it takes…a lot of effort to go and make sure that…everybody has the same kind of thinking…because it is not really required to have 100%...qualified teachers, even in my area I got only two of us that are qualified(Esy, Interview, pp.10-11).*

Esy explains there are "one and a half" (Esy, Interview, p.29) qualified teachers out of five teachers within her area of the education and care centre. Esy clearly explains that the centre is not breaking regulations by having low numbers of qualified staff in her area, as they are co-joined with the older children group who have a higher proportion of qualified staff to children. She explains

> *So what I am saying is for the whole centre, we have enough qualified teachers… the preschool group has got four qualified teachers, in my group there is only two, well one and a half because she doesn't work full time… that's a struggle, and it's not really even manageable. (Esy, Interview, p.29)*

Despite meeting the standards expected for the education and care centre legislated by the government, Esy contests the levels of 'expertise' within the centre, and argues the minimum

level of expertise results in practices which are far from the exemplary status applied to her setting and practice.

Likewise, Linda argues her experiences within early childhood affected the enactment of exemplary practice within the setting as she experienced a sense of professional isolation from her inability to communicate with other teachers and workers who shared a positive view of giftedness. She explains there were only two teachers she felt she "could have a conversation with them and feel that I didn't have to over, over cook what I was saying" (Linda, Interview, p.27) in relation to the mix of qualified and unqualified staff within the setting. Unfortunately, Linda does not specify whether these teachers were qualified or not in the interview. Conversely, Iri, and Mina's education and care settings employ fully qualified teachers, and they describe experiences with their teaching teams very differently, Iri constantly refers to her team as 'we' when she describes perceptions and practice, implying unity in her perception of the team. Mina describes her team as "They are really amazing and very open" (Mina, Interview, p.18). As Iri contests the notion of giftedness yet experiences feelings of unity and collegiality within her education and care setting regarding their approach to giftedness, an association with acceptance of giftedness with a teaching qualification is not appropriate. Teachers may hold differing views of giftedness yet still hold a teaching qualification; likewise unqualified workers may hold positive or negative views of gifted individuals. It is notable that the feelings of unity and collegiality expressed by the participants involved within settings with fully qualified staff, and the professional isolation/problems with pedagogy experienced by those in settings with a mix of unqualified and qualified staff.

Within these experiences the effects of the market rationalities on early childhood education in reducing costs through employing less expensive unqualified workers is challenged. The governmentality of the domain of early childhood, legislates levels of

qualified staff to children through regulatory practices. The neoliberal approach to governance, informed by an economic discourse promotes competition, as "for the neo-liberals…the essential thing of the market…is competition" (Foucault, 2008c, p. 118). In a competitive market product cost is crucial, and "the tendency to the reduction of costs" (Foucault, 2008c, p. 138) or, a price stability will be "the main objective of regulatory action" (Foucault, 2008c, p. 138). By setting the minimum standard through regulatory action, the government determines the minimum/maximum required costs for staff wages. Staffing fully qualified teachers will designate a higher cost than employment of unqualified teachers. As centres compete, through quality of service and costs to the consumer/parent this minimum/maximum cost in staff wages affects the price stability of the education and care centre. In order to compete, reduced costs to staffing become important to market viability, affecting exemplary practice for gifted infants and toddlers.

**Ratios of teachers to children.**

Some of the participants cite problems with the implementation of exemplary practice for gifted infants and toddlers as a result of the regulatory restrictions on the ratios of teachers to children within the education and care setting. Esy explains that children in her toddler room can be accelerated up to the next group, but this is determined by the correct ratios of teachers to children set out by the governmental regulations. Esy states "if there is an availability of space then that means that the child moves on earlier" (Esy, Interview, p.8), but is clear to explain that this acceleration is based on "numbers and the availability of the group" (Esy, Interview, p.6). Economic sensibilities – appropriate designation of numbers of children to teachers, and groups of children – enforced by governmental regulations impose limitations upon acceleration of gifted infants and toddlers. Informed by these economic sensibilities, regulations in Aotearoa New Zealand are a technology of government which intervene in

early childhood practice to promote neoliberal discursive practice as truthful means of governance. Failure to comply with these regulations results in disciplinary action by the government, consequently management is forced to conform to this normalising practice, or be punitively reprimanded by the government.

The ratios of teachers to children and group size for children within the domain of early childhood is also identified as a constraint by Elaras, who criticises that the ratios of teachers to children within the domain of early childhood is based on chronological ages, rather than the child's abilities. She challenges this as inappropriate for gifted infants and toddlers arguing "it's a numbers money game" (Elaras, Interview, p.24). Elaras argues the market approach to early childhood education reduces the opportunities for 'gifted' infants or toddlers to be exposed to situations where they can be with older children who may be their peers in the area of their 'gift', especially as these children's abilities are not within the bounds of their chronological age. The regulations regarding ratios based upon chronological age impact upon the gifted child's ability to interact with these peers. Regulations govern which children can be grouped together, according to chronological age, in order to determine appropriate ratios of teachers to children. The regulations regarding ratios and group sizes are not considered to be a reflection of 'quality' (Dalli et al., 2011), and arguably support the economic interests more than those of gifted infants and toddlers. Governmental regulatory practice intervenes on the conditions of the market in order to "encourage the…tendencies(of the market) and somehow push them to their limit and full reality" (Foucault, 2008c, p. 138), which promotes profits before the education of the child.

In addition to the mandatory age-based regulations upon ratios of teachers to children, many education and care centres in Aotearoa New Zealand group children into smaller age brackets. These smaller group sizes, which have been identified as an indicator of quality (Dalli et al., 2011), can influence parents' (positioned as 'consumers' within the discourse)

decision to enrol at an education and care centre. Within Esy's education and care centre children are grouped into three age brackets (in years: 0-2, 2-3, 3-5) rather than the two regulated age brackets (in years: 0-2, 2-5). However, Esy argues these smaller groups restrict the possibility of a gifted infant or toddler finding a peer who shares the same interests or abilities to interact with. In her experience management move children within age groupings according to the necessity to conform to the group sizes rather than the abilities of the child. Esy argues these decisions are based upon economics factors rather than the best interests of the gifted child, stating,

> [W]e have some, some factors or some issues now, because some of our toddlers are moving a bit earlier because…of availability and numbers, so we get more babies coming in…I got toddlers going into my group at about 20 months old. (Esy, Interview, p.6)

Foucault proposes a relationship between the designation of spaces and power (Foucault, 1979). Organisation of the physical space implies a power relationship between individuals. The designation of space, and the limitations imposed upon gifted infants and toddlers, constraining their desire to engage with more complex activities and children who are like-minded, enforces a power relationship between the management who are the designators of the space, and the children as docile bodies (Foucault, 1979). Gifted infants' and toddlers' agency is restricted by this organisation of space.

In contrast, Iri commends the minimal restrictions imposed within the structure of her education and care centre. She considers the agentic decisions of the child to be enabled due to the organisation of physical space. Within Iri's education and care centre, children are grouped together in one group encapsulating the total age range of two to five years (there are no children under two years at Iri's centre). The children are empowered to participate where they wish according to Iri,

*we don't segregate the younger children, if they want to come to inquiry they can, we just say who is interested, we are going to talk about this today, they can come, there's no, you know, age barrier there... if the two year olds want to come up, you know, they are welcome to come, there is no age restriction there. (Iri Interview p.8)*

As their programme has a larger group size and a wider age bracket, children are free to engage with a wide variety of materials and resources for a wide variety of abilities, and interact with children who are of a variety of ages.

## Summary

The dominant economic discourse informed by the neoliberal paradigm of governance affects exemplary practice for gifted infants and toddlers. Some participants cite regulatory legislation as an impediment to exemplary practice. I have found that it is the neoliberal paradigm of government that informs the regulations which impedes exemplary practice. By "taking the formal principles of a market economy and referring and relating them to, of projecting them on to a general art of government"(Foucault, 2008c, p. 131) the domain of early childhood education is designated to be "privatised social policy" (Foucault, 2008c, p. 145), which promotes economic sensibilities as the optimum governance practice. Failure to comply with regulations results in disciplinary action by the government, consequently management is forced to conform to this normalising practice, or be punitively reprimanded by the government. Additionally, competition, costs and market viability inform decisions made within the domain of early childhood education. Economic discursive language is normalised within the early childhood domain affecting teachers and managers of early childhood services who negotiate within this neoliberal paradigm of governance, affecting the lives of gifted infants and toddlers. Additionally, teacher subject positions are made available

through the economic discourse, driven to provide quality education but tempered by economic rationalities. Alternate discourses create opportunities for contesting subjectivities. Community nominations of some of the participants as exemplary are disputed by the participants who query the possibilities for exemplary practice within the neoliberal social economy. This is expressed through their identification of economic factors impeding what they would consider exemplary pedagogical practice with gifted infants and toddlers, specifically opposition against the effects of governmental regulations based upon market principles.

# Chapter Nine: Discussion

## Introduction

The following discussion is my interpretation of the data I have collected and analysed in the findings chapter. The findings were organised into discourses and/or discursive images of gifted infants, toddlers and children shared and contested by the respondents and participants. However within the findings, it was apparent that one discourse intersected another discourse. The discourses and discursive images intersect and overlap as they are informed and reify each other. Within the discussion chapter, there is the scope for allowing the themes to bleed between the sub-sections of the discussion below. Consequently the discussion is arranged into a single overarching theme, with smaller subsections.

As outlined within the Findings chapter, the Foucauldian lens utilised to analyse the data involved examining the shared understandings and the normative positioning of objects and subjects by the participants. The discourse analysis I applied to the textual data produced within the research study was concerned with perceptions of truth held by the respondents and participants within the study, and how discursive truths within the early childhood educational domain, the gifted education domain, and the wider society informed the perceptions of participants. Within this Discussion chapter, I am concerned with the ways in which the discourses identified within the findings chapters, and those identified within the Literature Review and the Contextual Setting of the Study chapters intersect into an predominant thesis of "What is exemplary practice for gifted infants and toddlers in Aotearoa New Zealand".

The normative positioning of gifted infants and toddlers within the discursive fields of early childhood education and gifted education have been explored within the Contextual Setting and Literature Review chapters. The thematic areas of the Findings chapters were also teased out of the data as they reflect or reject these normative positions. In this Discussion

chapter, the power relationships implied through this normative positioning is investigated further, and the implications for pedagogical practice, the subjectivities of the gifted infant and toddlers, and the disciplinary implications for teachers are explored.

The participants negotiated and engaged in discourses which informed their perceptions of giftedness and gifted education for infants and toddlers in Aotearoa New Zealand. The findings reflected the tensions between the discursive positioning of the gifted infant or toddler and how this reflected or resisted what the participant considered to be dominant discursive positions within society. Discursive positioning of the gifted infant or toddler implicates effects of power by making certain actions and positions available, and limiting others. Foucault asserts, "[Power] is a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely; it is nevertheless always a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action" (Foucault, 1982, p. 789).

The participants were all nominated by the members of the gifted and early childhood communities as exemplary teachers for gifted infants and toddlers within Aotearoa New Zealand. All the participants were subject to the effects that the governance of the early childhood education sector had upon their practices with gifted infants and toddlers. The discourses and discursive images teased out from the data reflect the impacts this governance has upon the participants perceptions of exemplary practice, and their perceived ability to facilitate exemplary practice for gifted infants and toddlers. The discussion will address the implications the governance of early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand has in relation to the findings from the data and the research questions.

# The Discourse of Exemplary Practice

Underlying the nomination of the participants within the study was the consideration of the exemplary nature of their practice with gifted infants and toddlers. As stated earlier within this thesis, the term exemplary was mediated to reflect the theoretical framework, and positioned as a discursive construct. When utilised within the context of this thesis, exemplary represents how the utilisation of dominant discourses by the members of the gifted and early childhood communities inform a 'desirable model' of exemplary teacher practice. I contend that there are significant tensions between the discursive construction of 'desirable model' of the exemplary teacher and the perceptions and practices of the participants involved within the study.

Within the findings, discursive images of the exemplary teacher in gifted education are constructed by the respondents. These images reflect the views the respondents hold regarding giftedness. For respondents who maintain the actuality of giftedness, the discursive image of the exemplary practitioner in gifted education is a teacher who is knowledgeable of the 'needs' of gifted learners, holds qualifications in gifted education, demonstrates sensitivity to gifted learners, and not only accepts but promotes a concept of giftedness in their practice. For respondents who question the concept of giftedness, the discursive image of the exemplary teacher is one who refutes a 'label' of 'giftedness, who enacts the same teaching practices for all children irrespective of ability yet is sensitive to the individuality of the child, and who considers the 'whole' child without compartmentalising their gifted ability. Consequently, the notion of the exemplary teacher for gifted infants and toddlers is heavily informed by the discourses of giftedness maintained by the respondent.

**Contesting the term 'gifted'.**

Mina, Iri, Esy and Elaras all contest the use of the term gifted in their practice, querying its relevance for infants/toddlers and demonstrating sensitivity to the negative connotations that may be invoked through its use. Gifted is displaced with more egalitarian terminology, seeking to teaching to all children's individual strengths and rendering comparative assessment redundant. The problematic (negative) discursive image of the gifted child is circumvented when the term gifted is supplanted by other terms by participants (such as talented or highly able/intelligent) to describe gifted infants and toddlers. Within the wider community responses to the questionnaire, the majority of the respondents expressed that giftedness is an attribute that deserves more understanding, recognition, and acknowledgement by the wider community; acceptance and promotion of a positive gifted discourse was a necessary attribute of the exemplary teacher. This construction of the exemplary teacher is potentially contested by the participant's displacement of the term gifted.

Teachers who reject a gifted discourse also contest parents who promote a discursive image of their child as gifted. In Iri's centre, parents commonly use the term gifted with the teachers, and express a keen interest in positioning their child as a gifted individual, irrespective of Iri and her teams' hesitance with the utilisation of the term gifted. Iri's discursive positioning of all children as 'competent and confident' as the dominant discursive position within her practice, contests parental discourses of 'giftedness'. The aspirations statement, specifically the positioning of all children as confident and competent has become a normative construct, defining children's lived experiences within the domain of early childhood education. Positioning children as either gifted or 'confident and competent' is an act of evaluation, which colonises the subject, and enacts power relationships between those that are evaluated and those that evaluate (Foucault, 2003). The definition of the subject

according to legitimised knowledge authenticates or disciplines the subject, promoting their compliance, supressing their defiance and creating normal and abnormal spaces for individuals. This evaluative act is further problematised when challenged by others. Power relationships between Iri and parents are invoked when the actions of individuals modify other's actions (Foucault, 1982). Further investigation into the parents discursive positioning would aid understanding of these power relationships. There is also the question of the promotion of a dominant discursive image within the education environment for the child, and whether it is representative of the teacher's perceptions or the families' perceptions. How teachers interact with children influence children's sense of self perception (Merry, 2004). Dominant discourses affect the infant and toddlers emerging self-identity by regulating the responses and explorations the infants and toddlers engage in (Akast, 2012), the imposition of a dominant conception of childhood upon the infant and toddler which may not reflect that of the family creates dominant and alternate subject positions for the gifted infant or toddler. The exemplary teacher constructed as a promoter of the concept of giftedness is challenged by the teachers who reject a gifted discourse.

**A 'gifted label'.**

The ascription of the label gifted was considered by the participants to negatively affect pedagogy for the gifted infant/toddler. The participants argued that few teachers constructed a positive image of the gifted child, limiting the subject positions made available to gifted children. These dominant (negative) discursive images of the gifted child denote appropriate behaviour for children through conventionalised dictums (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998b), consequently the rejection of the gifted 'label' is perceived as a means of denying the power effects the dominant discursive image would have in negatively affecting the gifted child. The participants' contestation of the term gifted – specifically Mina, Elaras and Esy – informed

their perceptions of identification of gifted infants and toddlers within their practice. These participants challenged the necessity to identify infants and toddlers, or indeed any children as gifted when there was a negative dominant discursive image of a gifted child within the wider community. The ascription of the term gifted was tantamount to labelling the child with this negative image, or compartmentalising the child into the dominant discursive image of a gifted being. Identification procedures were considered only necessary in order to validate the educational needs of the gifted child to others within the wider community. Mina, Elaras, Esy and Linda explicated the 'gifted label' could negatively impact upon the infant/toddler who would be labelled gifted. Iri also considers the term gifted as a label and argues she would state stating "it's a child who is gifted rather than a gifted child" (Iri, Interview, p.2). This is reflective of other research findings into perceptions of giftedness within the domain of early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand which find that some early childhood educators reject giftedness because this concept is incongruent with a 'holistic' view of the child (Keen, 2005); a gifted discourse contests a 'holistic' discourse. Rejection of a gifted discourse and adoption of a dominant socio-cultural discourse is demonstrated within the displacement of giftedness with the discursive image of all children as 'confident and competent'. The participants' positioning as an exemplary teacher in gifted education for infants and toddlers is problematised by the participants adoption of discourses and promotion of discursive images of the gifted child which do not reflect those promoted by the respondents in their construction of the exemplary teacher.

**Giftedness as a 'special need'.**

Many of the respondents employed discursive language positioning gifted children as having specific 'needs' and some of the respondents specifically positioned giftedness as a 'special need'. Some other respondents argued that gifted education was a concern of inclusionary

practice for gifted infants and toddlers. Likewise many of the participants negotiated with the discursive positioning of giftedness as a 'special need'. Gifted infants and toddlers were discursively positioned by Esy, Elaras, Linda and Mina as having particular needs. In this respect, there is alignment between the discursive images of the respondents and the participants. However, positioning of giftedness as a special need' must be problematised in order to reveal the power relationships that are present in viewing gifted children through a special needs lens.

The governmental document *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) either positions giftedness as an area of special needs, or disregards giftedness. As other NZMoE documentation positions giftedness as a special need, it is assumed this is also the case with *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996). Within educational practice, the notion of children, families and communities as having particular 'needs' is promoted within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) which intimates positive outcomes for children whose educators are more in tune to these 'needs'. School aged gifted children are also positioned by the Ministry of Education as beings of 'needs' within *Gifted and talented students: meeting their needs in New Zealand schools* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2012a). However, construction of a 'needs' discourse implies particular images of children in relation to abilities as the term 'special needs' has been historically positioned as a replacement term for children with disabilities. Gifted children as 'highly able' contest the image of 'special needs' as synonymous with 'disable'. By engaging in a needs discourse, children are constructed "in particular ways with particular consequences, and are implicated in particular exercises of power" (R. Edwards, 2001, p. 39). Positioning of gifted education as a concern of 'needs' invokes a human rights discourse, seeking to unsettle the dominant discourses which promote exclusionary practices. However Foucault asserts discursively constructing individuals as beings of rights positions individuals

within a juridical discourse, promoting a concept of rights which are granted or revoked according to a juridical system, dislocating personal agency. Additionally, there power relationships are negotiated in the construction of a child as a being of 'needs'. The supposition of a 'need' within the teacher-student relationship involves assumptions being made about one individual by another individual. Within this relationship, the student is made subject to (Foucault, 1982) the evaluative gaze of the teacher, implying power relationships between those being assessed and those who assess.

**Developmental and socio-cultural discourses.**

Many of the respondents positioned giftedness within a developmental discourse, constructing a discursive image of the gifted infant or toddler in relation to their exceptionality beyond the bounds of a normative progression of human development. The exemplary teacher must demonstrate awareness of the gifted child's deviation from developmental norms, and attend to these with more 'advanced' content evoking the negative image of gifted children within an egalitarian discourse. Tensions between the developmental discourse the socio-cultural discourse underpinning *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) were identified by participants. Iri and Mina held differing perceptions on the impact the developmental discourse would have upon other teachers' pedagogy, with Mina arguing that the developmental discourse was not dominant in early childhood, and Iri insisting that it still is. Other research documentation from Aotearoa New Zealand promotes a developmental discourse, informing educators to respond to infants and toddlers according to "their temperamental and age characteristics" (Dalli et al., 2011, p. 3). Teachers are indoctrinated into this discourse through the NZMoE's promotion of this document as a truth, yet contested by the promotion of other discourses within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996). The legacy of developmental psychology as a dominant discourse has

undermined the construction of the child as multi-faceted, culturally located, powerful, and as having a right to be a part of the society (Cannella, 2002; Nyland & Rockel, 2007).

According to gifted education research, dominant developmental discursive constructs pervade training programmes for teachers of the gifted (Sherwood, 1996; Vidergor & Eilam, 2011). These constructs serve to normalise definitions for the child and effect the perceptions of teachers (Dahlberg et al., 2007; David, 2011; Siegle, 2001; Speirs Neumeister et al., 2007). Ziegler & Phillipson (2012) assert that traditional definitions of giftedness are based upon the mechanistic metaphor prevalent in empirical sciences, in which a phenomenon can be understood by defining its component parts and deducing the laws of their interaction. These discursive positions contest socio-cultural perspectives maintained within the domain of early childhood education. However, many researchers and practitioners within the fractured terrain of the domain of gifted research and education seek to negotiate new pathways through alternate discourse, and displace the dominant psychological discursive underpinnings of theories of 'giftedness'. Historical conceptualisations of giftedness share an empirical research history with a developmental psychology underpinning. Historical discourses of early childhood education were also informed through developmental psychology. These traditions impact upon contemporary conceptualisations and dominant discursive positions of giftedness. Contemporary theorists have attempted to patch concepts of giftedness to mediate them with postmodernist concerns regarding social relativism (Cohen, 2012), yet a modernist developmental paradigm still dominates concepts of giftedness, and these attempts to patch have been criticised as "such tweaking and patching ultimately creates a cumbersome theory" (Ambrose, Sternberg, & Sriraman, 2012, p. 5).

The concepts of giftedness maintained by some of the respondents and participants reflect an attempt at this form of 'tweaking'. Some respondents and participants negotiated between the developmental discourse, and socio-cultural discourse, still maintaining

developmental discursive language in their discussion of gifted infants and toddlers, yet also seeking to incorporate socio-cultural discourse through the discursive image of the child as an individual who is culturally and contextually located. These respondents and participants argued that the exceptionality of the gifted infant or toddler was beyond a normative scale of development, and required sensitivity and understanding of an individualised approach to the child which is responsive to their cultural and contextual needs, not a generalised application of a normative scale. The developmental discourse underpinning conceptions of giftedness contest the dominant socio-cultural discourses within early childhood education which seek to locate the child's abilities within their cultural setting, and view each child in relation to their own progress rather than to normative scales. The shift in the historical alignment of the discourses informing giftedness and early childhood education is alluded to by Iri, who articulates that she has changed her views on giftedness since the advent of *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996), which she identifies as having a 'socio-cultural' focus which surprised her and her peers. The shift from a dominant developmental discourse towards a socio-cultural discourse within early childhood education has affected this alignment. If developmental discourse is underpinning gifted terminology, this may indeed conflict with the socio-cultural and ecological foci of *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996), and affect the negative or positive interpretation of the phenomenon of giftedness in relation to socio-cultural discourse prevalent within early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

It appears that within the domain of early childhood education, there is awareness and promotion of the individualised approach to understanding giftedness from a socio-cultural perspective, yet often discursive language to describe giftedness is informed by developmental terminology. These contesting discursive images created tension, positioning gifted children both inside and outside normative scales. These contesting discourses within

the fields of giftedness and early childhood education create multiple subject positons, which are negotiated by the participants in their interactions with others in the education and care setting. Within the domain of early childhood education, developmental psychology is argued to decontextualise the child, and objectify children and ourselves as pedagogues and researchers (Dahlberg et al., 2007). The tensions between the discourses within the domains of gifted and early childhood education undermine the validity giftedness is attributed within the field of early childhood education.

**The exemplary teacher as an 'expert'.**

The majority of respondents maintained that appropriate qualifications were necessary in identifying giftedness. However there were disparities between respondents regarding the most important identifier of 'giftedness'. Some of the respondents clearly stated that parents should be the first or sole identifier of gifted ability; some of the respondents asserted that parents would not know their child is gifted. The tensions between qualifications and 'expertise' were negotiated within the construction of the image of the exemplary teacher. Questions of legitimacy were raised regarding the primacy of the qualified early childhood teacher versus the qualified psychologist in identification procedures. Some respondents rejected the legitimacy of the qualified teacher as an expert in gifted education, yet conversely, some respondents argue the experience an early childhood teacher has with a wide variety of children is more beneficial in identifying giftedness in an infant or toddler. The dominance of the expert discourse generated power effects between the teacher and the external expert (behavioural psychologist, educational psychologist, etc.). Contemporary discursive positioning of the trained psychologist as the expert in identification procedures of the gifted infant and toddler are informed by historic discursive practices. Terman also asserted that only a trained assessor could provide an "accurate diagnosis" (Terman 1919 p.

xi, cited in Galitis, 2009, p. 34) of gifted ability. A dominant discursive image of an exemplary identifier of gifted children is contested, informed by these perceptions of legitimacy.

These questions of legitimacy were also represented in the participants' construction of the image of the 'expert' in gifted education. The majority of the participants rejected their positioning as an exemplary teacher within gifted education for infants and toddlers. These participants argued they did not hold the required 'expertise' to be considered exemplary and identified many concerns in their practice with gifted infants and toddlers which contested their positioning as an exemplary teacher. Esy devalued her abilities in relation to specialised gifted education 'experts' whom she considered more knowledgeable. Esy contends that these experts should take action in leading better understanding of gifted education for the entire early childhood community rather than taking action herself, imbuing these experts with the power to change gifted education instead of her own agentic actions. The participants' subjectivity as a 'learner' was promoted as an alternative to an exemplary or 'expert' subject position. However the participants adopted an 'expert' subject position in relation to other teachers' perceptions on giftedness; many participants renegotiated this 'learner' position, when they considered other teachers to have less knowledge about giftedness. When the participants came in contact with discursive practices and views that contested the actuality of giftedness, the participants undertook an 'expert' position to educate the other person and promote their own discursive image of the gifted child.

The participants argued the lack of direction in promoting a common view of giftedness was responsible for other individuals maintaining discursive images of giftedness which they deemed 'inappropriate'. Within the course of the findings chapters many participants expressed concern that crucial supportive connections between the individuals involved within early childhood education were broken down due to their inability to converge on a

shared understanding of giftedness. Dalli et al (2011)contend that quality pedagogical practice for infants and toddlers relies upon:

> *...a membrane of constantly evolving supportive connections between teachers and children, teachers and teachers, structural elements of the organisation of the centre, and the centre's philosophy and leadership style, all of which are located within a broader policy infrastructure* (Dalli et al., 2011)

The participants argue that interpretation of curriculum for gifted infants and toddlers is negatively affected due to the lack of unity in understandings of giftedness by the teaching team. Dogmatism in a perception of giftedness, whether held by those supporting gifted education or those against it promote normative views, and discursive positions that are for the child rather than of the child. Dominant discourses, maintained by varying disciplines, serve to limit the "discursive positions that are available for children to experience their lives" (Duncan, 2010, p. 100). The construction of the discursive image of the gifted child is an act of power, as "every construction or formulation of the term 'childhood' is an exercise of power" (S. Farquhar & Fleer, 2007, p. 34). The images of a gifted infant or toddler serve to denote or withhold power over the children in society through discursive practices, or disciplines. There is tension in the denotation or withholding of power in relation to the discursive positioning of the child in when the child is not party to the adoption or construction of the term. Discursive practices create subject positions, locating individuals within the discourse, and creating opportunities for multiple subjectivities across varying discourses (Foucault, 2006). The exemplary status of the participants maintained by the community, whether embraced by the participants or not, implies power relationships in their construction and promotion of particular images of giftedness and gifted infants and toddlers.

Many of the participants demonstrate sensitivity to the power relationships invoked in their positioning as exemplary or an 'expert', and the effect the actions they undertake within

these positions can have upon other actions, or can modify other's actions. The exercise of power is not simply a relationship between people; it is a way in which actions of individuals modify others actions (Foucault, 1982).The participants are aware of the power relationships produced through their construction and denotation of the term gifted upon infants and toddlers in their concerns with the gifted label, in relation to how giftedness is discursively constructed by others within Aotearoa New Zealand, particularly socially accepted forms of giftedness and marginalised forms.

**Summary.**

In summary, the discursive construction of the term exemplary represents how the utilisation of dominant discourses by the members of the gifted and early childhood communities inform a 'desirable model' of exemplary teacher practice, yet there are tensions with the construction of the exemplary teacher and the discourses that underpin the images and practices of the participants. The adoption of discourses and discursive images of giftedness which contest those maintained by the respondents in their construction of an exemplary teacher challenges the notion that exemplary practice for gifted infants and toddlers must be informed by knowledge, qualifications and adoption of a concept of giftedness. Despite views which often contested those promoted by the community respondents, the enactment of the participants' pedagogical practice with gifted infants and toddlers was not only accepted but promoted by members of the community as exemplary through their nomination to participate within the study. This raises questions about the discontinuity between the characteristics in the 'desirable' model of a teacher for gifted infants and toddlers, and the pedagogical approaches which demonstrate exemplary practice.

# Governmentality of Gifted Education Within the Domain of Early Childhood Education in Aotearoa New Zealand

*By this word "governmentality" I mean three things…the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics…[secondly]the development of a series of specific governmental apparatuses (appareils) on the one hand, [and, on the other]… the development of a series of knowledges…[finally] …the administrative state…the tactics of government that allow the continual definition of what should or should not fall within the state's domain, what is public and what private.* (Foucault, 2009, pp. 144–145)

The exercise of power is not simply a relationship between people; it is a way in which actions of individuals modify others actions (Foucault, 1982). Power is an effect of actions upon actions, a relationship of power is defined by the modes of actions which are regulated currently and in the future (Foucault, 1982).

As discussed within Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework, contemporary governance is no longer concerned with legitimacy, rights or freedom but with the question of limitations and involvement of government in the climate of a 'political economy'. Governance within a political economy endeavours to promote competition through "permanent vigilance, activity, and intervention" (Foucault, 2008c, p. 132), programming actions for individuals.

The actions of the individuals involved in gifted education, within the domain of early childhood education are modified by apparatuses, tactics and techniques: a form of governmentality. These are disciplinarily enforced through the *Early Childhood Funding Handbook* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2014b), the *Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008* (New Zealand Government, 2008) and the *Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Centres 2008* (New Zealand Ministry of Education,

2008). These regulatory practices intervene on the conditions of the market in order to "encourage the…tendencies(of the market) and somehow push them to their limit and full reality" (Foucault, 2008c, p. 138), promoting competition between educational services to gain a greater share of the market, and the subsequent profits. The effects of governmentality upon the discursive images of giftedness and discursive practices within gifted early childhood education were identified by the participants as having a major impact upon their enactment of exemplary practice with gifted infants and toddlers, and societal perceptions of giftedness and gifted education. Many participants cited frustration at their inability to implement exemplary pedagogical practice for gifted infants and toddlers as this was hindered by governmental regulations upon the structure of the early childhood environment; regulations that do not prioritise children's educational interests, rather these regulations demarcate spaces and designate practices to promote a cost-efficient means of managing a service. This impediment to what most of the nominated exemplary teachers consider to be the best practice for gifted infants and toddlers has been identified as having major implications for the educational outcomes for gifted children.

Governance of gifted education impacts upon all aspects of children, families and teachers' lived experiences within the domain of early childhood education. Dalli et al. (2011) assert that quality early childhood education for infants and toddlers is considered to be "neither neutral nor innocent but as a technology of government" Within the findings chapters, I have identified the respondents and participants responses in relation to an expert discourse, an economic discourse, developmental discourse, and discursive images of giftedness. Underpinning the power effects of these discourses is their positioning and promotion by the tactics of government and governmental apparatuses. Active governmental discursive practices determine: funding, staffing, and designation of spaces; these governmental technologies determine the quality of education, however the responsibility for

quality in education is devolved to the private providers. Negotiating the boundaries between state responsibility for social services and neoliberal perspectives on privatisation, a 'third way' form of governmentality (Roberts & Peters, 2008) positions social needs within the domain of the public market, with the governance the quality of the service positioned as the responsibility of the private providers. Governmental regulation sets boundaries for the quality of the service through 'minimum standards'. Costs can then be argued to be increased, or quality lessened as they reflect these 'minimum standards'. The "permanent vigilance, activity, and intervention" (Foucault, 2008c, p. 132) promotes the stimulation of the market, but not necessarily quality indicators of education.

Ritchie, Skerrett, and Rau, (2014) argue that a neoliberal approach to governance positions education services outside the realm of the state within "a form of governmentality that allows governmental officeholders to maintain a sense of independence from any calamities that ensue" (p. 119). While vigilance is maintained in regulations to stimulate the market, quality is demarcated outside the domain of governmental responsibility through governmental strategy. The regulation of high quality in education is not considered to be within the bounds of the government, contesting dominant political educational discourses promoted within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) including a vision for pedagogy which is "child-centred and learning-oriented" (Reedy & Reedy, 2002, p. 1), and respects "indigenous values of collectivism" (J. Ritchie et al., 2014, p. 120). Teachers within early childhood education must negotiate these contesting discourses as they promote the values of *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996)*,* yet negotiate economic sensibilities in their profession. Cannella (2011) questions whether politicians can function outside of dominant power structures which have entrenched neoliberal values within policy and practice, and argues that movements which support community based control of education can initiate proactive change. As argued earlier, the allocation of funds towards

centre running costs or private gain is determined by the status of the education and care centre as private (for profit) or community based (not for profit). The status of the educational service (profit/not for profit) directly relates to the quality of the service, with not for profit providers more likely to produce higher levels of quality (P. Moss, 2009). Promotion of the community based education and care centre can promote quality in educational practice through the negation of education 'for profit'.

**Governance of teacher practices.**

The neoliberal governance of early childhood education affects the participants' exemplary interpretation of curriculum for gifted infants and toddlers. Esy and Mina engage in an economic discourse in their discussion of interpretation of curriculum. Esy argues that monetary limitations affect her ability to source resources to extend gifted children's learning. Mina also argues that the government would not be able to support gifted children with extension workers, and it is only due to the 'not for profit' status of her centre that the surplus revenue was channelled into funding an extra teacher. The status of the educational service (profit/not for profit) directly relates to the quality of the service, with not for profit providers more likely to produce higher levels of quality (P. Moss, 2009). Successive governments of Aotearoa New Zealand have promulgated the competitive market within education, normalising economic discursive practices within early childhood education. The marketisation of the domain of early childhood education has forced management of education and care centres to make decisions based upon 'market knowledge' which "became a pre-requisite for success in a neo-liberal world" (Roberts, 2004, p. 360). These decisions do not promote quality educational practice unless it is in the best economic interest to do so. Early childhood services within Aotearoa New Zealand have been privatised in order to "limit public expenditure and allow greater choice and control by parents" (S. Farquhar, 2008b, p.

125). As argued within Chapter One: Background and Outline of the Topic, the convergence by neoliberals and feminists upon the promotion of 'choice' in education underpinned marked change within the educational sector (Stover, 2013). Yet the discursive construction of 'choice' is contested, choices for women to choose to work are supplanted by neoliberal interpretations of choice which promote the mechanisms of the market within educational practice. Parents and families of children who are given their 'choice' of early childhood educational providers are not necessarily equipped with the knowledge to discern quality effectively, and are often limited in their ability to choose which provider to use as necessity often drives participation within an education and care centre (P. Moss, 2009), limiting opportunities to alter the market and promote quality educational provision.

Allocation of governmental funding is problematised by the tension between the location of the education and care centre as a public or private space. When applied to the domain of early childhood education, the market-driven approach "does not work as markets are meant to do; it does not guarantee quality or efficiency, and in fact dispenses services in a highly inequitable fashion." (Ball and Vincents, 2005, cited in P. Moss, 2009, p. 21). Governmental funding is provided to profit and not-for profit providers alike, yet research on quality provision argue not-for-profit providers are more likely to dispense high quality pedagogy (P. Moss, 2009). The ethics of applying market sensibilities to the lived experiences of the child within the early childhood setting, are questionable, as there is no ability to replicate these experiences for the child, and *"[u]*nlike material commodities in a market, parents cannot easily obtain a refund or a new model if they are dissatisfied with their child's outcomes"* (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2006, p. 116). The neoliberal approach to governance of education does not promote quality unless it is economically prudent to do so, consequently despite political rhetoric to the contrary

(National Party of New Zealand, 2014a) the technologies of governance promoted by the contemporary government does not stimulate quality educational practice.

The role of parenting is contracted out to educational providers under the auspices of doing so for the child's benefit, or as social good (S. Farquhar, 2010). However, the positioning of the parent as the 'consumer' of early childhood education within the economic discourse is contested by theories which promote the agency of the child. While parents are positioned as the main 'consumers' of education within the economic discourse, children directly engage in the experience and have the "most first-hand experience of the commodity sold on the market" (P. Moss, 2009, p. 17). In positioning the parents as the 'consumers' the agency of the child is displaced. In promoting the benefits of early childhood education, children are positioned as being 'at risk' of failure if they do not attend early educational services, normalising both the neoliberal gaze for evaluating a child to be 'at risk' and the act of evaluation itself (Cannella, 2011). These strategies further displace the agentic decisions of the child regarding their perceptions regarding their involvement within the early childhood setting.

Children positioned to be 'at risk' are considered to be of more 'potential value' when invested in; consequently funds are channelled into this educational arena through governmental apparatuses. These perceptions construct a vision of a 'poor and weak' child who must be protected by adults (Moss & Petrie, 2002). It is in these circumstances that the relationship between power and knowledge through the medium of discourse serves as a form of manipulation. Potentiality of the child is informed by normalised perceptions of infants and toddlers which position these individuals as "'becoming', 'incomplete' and 'lacking' in terms of child development" (Duncan, 2005, p. 5).Within this discursive image, it is deemed appropriate for adults to make educational decisions for the infant or toddler, as the infant or toddler is incapable of making fully informed 'adult' decisions for themselves.

As argued within the contextual information section of this thesis, early childhood education is seen to be a means of moulding the child to become a model future citizen. The images of the child as 'incomplete' and 'lacking' in reference to child development are contested by the image of the child as a capable being; a confident and competent being promoted within the aspirations statement of *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) which states,

> *This curriculum is founded on the following aspirations for children: to grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body, and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society. (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 9)*

Yet consideration of this statement as a discursive construct, and not a 'truth' for children should be considered. It is argued that all children are discursively positioned within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) through neoliberal discursive constructions of the 'good' child (Duhn, 2006). Duhn (2006) asserts that *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) is a technology of citizenship, constructing children according to the neoliberal discursive image of the future 'ideal' citizen who must be confident and competent in order to be successful in the unpredictable future society. The promotion of the image of the 'confident and competent' child is arguably the promotion of a child who is discursively constructed to 'succeed' within a neoliberal society.

This discursive image of the model future neoliberal citizen is further problematised when considering the learning trajectories and pathways for the gifted child. These discursive construction of the 'good' child of *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) as a technology of citizenship influences the expression of giftedness through pedagogy that values particular ways of knowing and being. Evaluating all children as 'confident and competent' ascribes a normalising discursive image of the child according to neoliberal

discursive values for children's development maintained within the discipline of early childhood education, a point worth considering as Foucault contends that the "discipline 'makes' individuals" (Foucault, 1979, p. 170). The promotion of particular dispositions which reflect the aspirations of the economic approach of the government encourages the development of gifted 'individuals' to promote their own individual interests (Ambrose, 2012). These images contest Māori concepts of giftedness which promote shared value and responsibility for the gifts of the child, and engenders an expectation that these gifts are shared through service in the community (Macfarlane, Webber, Cookson-Cox, & McRae, 2012)

**The administrative state: Funding of gifted education and early childhood education.**

Resources for gifted children were identified by many respondents as a crucial aspect of extension within the early childhood environment. Like many of the participants, ample suitable and relevant resources are considered crucial in the extension of gifted infants and toddlers, and the education setting is considered to be responsible for the provision of these resources. Governmental policy encourages competition between early childhood centres through the promotion of choice for parents, influenced by parental perceptions of the quality of the service (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2014a). Educational quality is tempered by economic rationalities which guide parental decisions in their choice of education and care centre. As outlined above, governmental policy encourages competition through the promotion of choice for parents. The government positions this choice as being influenced solely by parental perceptions of the quality of the service (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2014a), however relationships between quality and price are not simplistic (Shugan, 1984) and parents can be enticed to utilise lower-cost products when they perceive the quality is of similar value to those of a higher cost (Yoon, Oh, Song, Kim, & Kim, 2014).

Higher group sizes and fewer teachers per group of children reduces costs for the owner, which can reduce costs for parents, improving the marketability of the education and care centre if parents perceive the quality to be of sufficient value in relation to the cost. Whilst quality indicators of early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand have been investigated and promoted (A. Smith, 2013), parental choice is also determined by cost, which has been historically found to be an influential factor (Barraclough & Smith, 1996).

The relationship between costs and qualifications are also discussed by some of the participants. In the construction of the exemplary teacher, the respondents considered qualifications to be highly important for the education of gifted infants and toddlers. Many respondents assert one of the most important personal/professional attributes of a teacher working with gifted infants and toddlers is their knowledge of gifted ability and holding relevant qualifications to inform this knowledge. However normalisation of the economic discourse promotes perceptions which view economic factors to impinge upon the 'affordability' of a fully qualified team. The dominant economic discourse normalises the employment of unqualified workers within education and care centres; the lack of governmental funding incentivising employment of a fully qualified team results in many centres employing unqualified workers to educate young children. The governmental tactics in relation to funding promote the perception that qualifications are not necessary in the education and care of young children, informed by the historical discursive positioning of the early childhood teacher as having low status (W. D. Barney et al., 1972; O'Rourke, 1978, p. 120).

Governmental funding for external experts who hold specialised qualifications in gifted education, was also perceived by the participants to be inadequate, limiting educational opportunities for gifted infants and toddlers. Restricted funding reduces opportunities for these specially qualified teachers to engage with children the participants considered to be

gifted. There were tensions with the procedures in which an infant or toddler was identified as gifted by experts working outside of the early childhood setting. Mina and her colleagues argued for identification procedures for a child within her early childhood education and care centre, but were frustrated as (in their view) infrequent visitations by the experts restricted the possibility for an effective assessment. Linda also contends that gifted children are not likely to receive specialist support from the Ministry of Education. Linda and Mina both assert that limitations to funding by the government affect identification procedures for gifted children. When gifted children were diagnosed with other special needs, gifted infants and toddlers were more likely to access external support. However in doing so, gifted infants and toddlers are marginalised as a minority group within a minority group, accessing a very small pool of governmental funds. This is also problematic for gifted infants or toddlers who are not expressing other special needs. The limited governmental funding for special education services, and the marginalisation of gifted education within this contestable pool of funds limits human and other resourcing for gifted infants and toddlers.

**Programming of actions of individuals: Initial teacher education programmes.**

Regulatory practices designating appropriate domains of learning within initial teacher education programmes are implicated as having a negative impact upon exemplary practice for gifted infants and toddlers. The respondents considered initial teacher education programmes to be responsible for ensuring teachers were knowledgeable about giftedness and gifted education. The management of the early childhood centre were also considered liable for teachers' knowledge of giftedness and gifted education provision within the education and care centre. Governmental effects within the domain of early childhood education are implicated in teachers' perceived lack of knowledge in gifted educational practice. Respondents explicate the importance of investing into the teacher's knowledge with

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professional development opportunities, and the value of initial teacher education in gifted education, promoting the perception of the exemplary teacher as having knowledge and opportunities for professional development. However, Elaras questions her initial teacher education, arguing she was not provided with sufficient information interpret curriculum for gifted children once she was designated a qualified teacher. When constructed through the expert discourse, Elaras is considered an educational expert through her legitimised qualification, yet Elaras queries this status, asserting she had no expertise in gifted education. The discursive positioning of the early childhood as the expert within gifted education by the NZMoE (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2012c) is challenged by some participants. Esy, Mina, and Iri question their positioning as an exemplary teacher in gifted education, arguing they do not hold sufficient knowledge to be considered an expert. Elaras problematises the expert status accredited to qualified educators. Elaras took it upon herself to seek further information, but contends other educators who receive the same initial teacher education may not, creating a gap in their knowledge of the attributes of gifted infants and toddlers.

Additionally, governmental regulation of teacher qualifications, numbers of qualified staff and teacher ratios are cited by some participants as limiting their ability to interpret curriculum for gifted infants and toddlers with their teams. As outlined earlier, a hierarchical structure of teachers' abilities in relation to their qualifications was present in Elaras' and Esy's discussion of unqualified teachers within their teams. Qualifications and appropriate teacher education was implicated in the teacher's ability to interpret curriculum for gifted infants and toddlers. Esy, Mina, Linda and Elaras all stated improved understandings by other early childhood teachers of the characteristics of giftedness would improve pedagogy for gifted infants and toddlers. Teachers' abilities to interpret curriculum would be improved if there was more information on giftedness and gifted education within initial teacher

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education programmes, and professional development opportunities. Elaras argued that some teachers without qualifications were just as proficient or more proficient in interpreting curriculum for gifted children, arguably as they have expressed an interest in gifted education and taken action to learn more themselves. Teachers who obtain a qualification but do not seek out further information in giftedness are less informed on gifted education as there is limited or no education on gifted children in initial teacher education. Consequently, unqualified teachers could arguably hold more knowledge of giftedness and gifted education, despite their lesser status in relation to the qualified teachers who are positioned as 'experts'.

**Governance of identification procedures.**

The dominant neoliberal discourse impacts upon identification procedures for gifted infants and toddlers. Identification procedures were considered problematic by the majority of the participants within the study. The participants argued that without the validation of an official assessment by an officially recognised test, performed by 'experts', any claims to gifted ability were seen by the members of the wider community to be unfounded. The scientific discourse has been "fully accepted and continues to dominate current practice" (Cannella, 1999, p. 37) within the educational field, imbuing certain members with the rights to speak and act. Foucault asserts that within contemporary neoliberal governance, scientific discourse is "absolutely indispensable for good government. A government that did not take into account this kind of analysis, the knowledge of these processes, which did not respect the result of this kind of knowledge, would be bound to fail"(Foucault, 2009, pp. 449–450). Resistance to this dominant discourse is voiced by Elaras who contests prominence afforded to identification procedures, arguing testing measures are not considered to be for the child, family, or the participants themselves, but for the detractors against gifted education within the educational community. Within the neoliberal discourse, the trained psychologist is

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positioned as the expert in identification procedures of the gifted. This discursive image is also informed by Terman's research into gifted education, asserting that only a trained assessor could provide an "accurate diagnosis" (Terman 1919 p. xi, cited in Galitis, 2009, p. 34) of gifted ability. Tensions between the status of the teacher as the educational expert, and the psychologist as a behavioural expert converge in the identification of a gifted infant or toddler. Mina, Elaras and Linda argued they build an in-depth knowledge of infant/toddlers' abilities through extensive on-going interaction with the child, yet the psychologist is legislatively approved and conventionally considered competent to grant gifted status. The prestige accredited to the scientific discourse by the government, accrediting credence to the scientific expert invokes a power relationship between the participants and external experts.

According to Cannella (1999) "acceptance of the scientific discourse of education has led to the emergence of forms of knowledge and 'experts' in that knowledge who are by definition given *exclusive rights to speak and act*" (p. 39). The external experts are granted the rights to denote who is gifted and who is not. A hierarchical order is superimposed upon the teachers within the educational field; the status of the individual is transferred or denied in relationship to their place in the hierarchy relative to their qualifications. This hierarchy is further informed by the historical discursive positioning the early childhood teacher as having low status (W. D. Barney et al., 1972; O'Rourke, 1978, p. 120). Moves to claim professional status within the domain of early childhood education (Dalli, 2010b) imply the hierarchical order, and measure early childhood educators within this discursive field.

The attribution of expert status to the early childhood teacher in relation to giftedness by the NZMoE legitimises the educators' discursive positioning of gifted infants and toddlers. The educator's discursive image of a gifted infant or toddler is promoted to the parents who approach the teachers within the education and care setting. Iri's positioning of all children as 'confident and competent' is promoted as dominant discourse. Elaras problematises the

expert status accredited to qualified educators arguing her initial teacher education did not give her sufficient information to be considered an expert on gifted education.

A hierarchical evaluation of qualifications in relation to other teachers was present in Elaras' and Esy's discussion of unqualified teachers within their teams. Teachers' abilities to identify gifted individuals and engage in pedagogical practice in relation to their qualifications were both positively and negatively situated by these participants. Esy devalued her abilities in relation to specialised gifted education 'experts', but also argues that the unqualified teachers were unable to identify giftedness in infants and toddlers nor engage in appropriate educational praxis or discussion of their praxis with the other members of the team as they had not had the opportunity to devote sufficient time to understanding early childhood philosophy as they would have in an initial teacher education programme. Elaras contests this hierarchy by arguing some of her best teachers have been unqualified. The government plays a critical role in this hierarchical relationship, accrediting status to qualified teachers within the early childhood environment, yet invoking regulatory requirements of only 50% qualified teachers within an education and care setting. As argued earlier, this creates tensions in terms of governmental funding for the employment of qualified teachers in the education and care centre.

The governance of identification procedures is further problematised by age restrictions upon when a child can be assessed and identified. Elaras points out that formalised assessment of gifted children cannot be completed until the child is the age of six. Consequently, the actions surrounding identification by external experts or teachers within the domain of early childhood are not validated until the child is considered to be of an appropriate identification age. Testing prior to this age is not completed as learning and behaviours of children under the age of 6 are positioned as variable. The child is discursively positioned as developing into their future more-capable self, denoting the infant/toddler as

undeveloped and incomplete. This hierarchically positions the future abilities of the child as of more importance than present abilities, valuing the future adult more than the child, invoking a power relationship between the child now, and the adult it will become. This discursive positioning serves to displace the present child in relationship to their future self, allowing other adults who are hierarchically higher and discursively positioned as 'knowing better' to be in a position to make decisions for the infant/toddler. Gifted infants and toddlers are positioned to be of less value than their elder more competent selves. When gifted infants and toddlers are discursively positioned as developing into their future more competent selves, there is a connection to the economic discursive image of the child as holding potential for 'human capital'. Within the economic discourse, the investment into the child is viewed as measureable in relation to their future potentiality, and contribution as a citizen. The child is discursively positioned as a 'being of potential', measureable and quantifiable in relation to their future value, displacing their present selves. There is a convergence in the economic discourse and the scientific discourse at this point, as the economic discourse is informed by the scientific discourse which denotes gifted ability in infants and toddlers to be an unreliable assessment of future potentiality, and consequently future value as a citizen of the state. The benefits of investing in potentially gifted infants and toddlers is considered of less value as there is no certainty that this investment will be markedly beneficial in the future to the state.

**Summary.**

Early childhood education and care is regulated by governmental procedure, and policy. Pedagogical training and practice is considered to be within the domain of the state; teachers are subjected to regulation by varying governmental apparatuses. However these apparatuses are informed by political economy, contesting ideologies of the public and the private impact

upon the discursive field of early childhood. From the profession of teaching to the constitution of the early childhood environment and curriculum, governmentality prevails over every aspect of early childhood education. This governmentality serves to normalise particular discourses and discursive images of gifted children, legitimising knowledge for teachers, children, families and the wider community. Governmentality of early childhood education constructs "the discursive positions that are available for children to experience their lives" (Duncan, 2010, p. 100), shaping the educational and wider societal experiences of gifted infants and toddlers and their families in Aotearoa New Zealand.

## Conclusion

The notion of the exemplary teacher for gifted infants and toddlers is heavily informed by the discourses of giftedness maintained by the respondent. The discourses and discursive images of the gifted infant and toddler were adopted or rejected by the participants, demonstrating a dislocation between respondents' construction of exemplary practice, and the teachers' perceptions of exemplary practices.

Respondents within the community questionnaire identify aspects of gifted education that are of importance, or to be improved that are within the realms of the government such as resourcing, funding, teacher expertise in relation to initial teacher education. The participants confirm these areas of concern in the governance of gifted education in Aotearoa New Zealand. The positioning of the domain of early childhood within an economic and neoliberal discourse is of particular concern as the majority of problems explicated by the respondents and participants were traced back to this discursive positioning. The participants and respondents agree that there is little recognition for gifted education and the best interests of gifted infants and toddlers. Teachers within early childhood education negotiate contesting

neoliberal discourses within governmental policy and indigenous discourses and discourses of social justice promoted within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996). Cannella (2011) questions whether politicians can function outside of dominant power structures. Teachers are equally constituted through these power structures. However, Cannella (2011) argues that movements which support community based control of education can initiate proactive change. As outlined earlier, the allocation of funds towards centre running costs or private gain is determined by the status of the education and care centre as private (for profit) or community based (not for profit), which in turn directly relates to the quality of the service. Not for profit providers more likely to produce higher levels of quality (P. Moss, 2009). Preferment for the community based education and care centre can impact overall quality in educational practice through the promotion of high quality practices which contest education as a means of making 'profit'.

# Chapter Ten: Conclusion

## Implications of the Construction of the Exemplary Teacher

As outlined within the discussion chapter, there are tensions between the perceptions held by those who support gifted education and those who query the construction of the term gifted. This research investigated how these discourses and discursive images were reflective or divergent from those within the gifted and early childhood communities. There are considerable problems between the constructions of giftedness posed by participants within the study, and the discursive construction of the exemplary teacher in gifted education for infants and toddlers. The perceptions of some of the participants regarding gifted education for infants and toddlers were incongruent with the respondents' construction of an exemplary teacher. From this investigation, it appears that the image of the exemplary teacher, is not necessarily adopted nor representative of the exemplary teacher themselves. The discourses and discursive positions employed by the individual constructing the notion of exemplary may be rejected by the person who is considered to be exemplary.

All of the participants negotiated discursive images of giftedness through their adoption or resistance to discourses promoted within the domain of early childhood education. Perceptions of giftedness and gifted education were discursively constructed through the participants' engagement or refutation of dominant discourses. Analysis of the data demonstrated that the majority of the nominated participants were passionate about gifted education, but one was not, and adopted a discursive image of children as 'confident and confident' informed by *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996). All the participants considered giftedness to be a field of contestation, through which their negotiation was challenged by other teachers who did not share their perceptions of giftedness. This raises questions about the discontinuity between the characteristics in the 'desirable' model of a teacher for gifted infants and toddlers, and the pedagogical approaches

which demonstrate exemplary practice. These contesting perceptions become problematic when the NZMoE advises parents who are interested or concerned about their child's gifted ability to consult their early childhood teacher, as they are situated those who "can also advise you about what to do next and provide contact details of those who can help if more support or information is needed" (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2015b).

Within the findings, it was found that discourses of giftedness informed the perceptions of exemplary practice, which contested the notion of a 'desirable' single model of exemplary practice for gifted infants and toddlers. The concept of giftedness was also contested through the employment of discourses with challenged the notion of giftedness. The economic discourse, a neoliberal discourse, an expert discourse, a developmental discourse, and a socio-cultural discourse were instrumental in the perceptions of the participants, informing their notions of exemplary practice. Most of these teachers did not consider themselves to be exemplary, nor to have sufficient knowledge and understanding of giftedness or gifted education to be considered exemplary. However, in relation to other teachers, these teachers consider themselves more supportive and informed regarding gifted education.

## Governance and Exemplary Practice

Governmental strategies are in place to increase participation in early childhood education to as high as 98% by 2016 (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2014h). With historic discursive positioning of early childhood education as the domain of 'unfortunate' children and maternal care promoted as the best form of education for young children, the reasoning behind this abrupt change need to be carefully considered (S. Farquhar, 2008a). In 2008, Farquhar asserted that "current early childhood policy is clearly in line with the international harnessing of human capital for economic productivity and the framing of early childhood education as a measureable return on investment". The arguments employed by the current

government are unchanged. Involvement in early childhood education is positioned by the government as the 'right' strategy to take for the future success of the child's life (National Party of New Zealand, 2014b). These arguments are informed by an economic discourse in which participation in early childhood education is viewed as more 'cost-effective' than later remedial measures (Barnett, 2008; Barnett & Nores, 2010; Heckman & Masterov, 2007; Springford, 2013; Stack, 2013). This thesis asserts that the strategies undertaken in the governance of early childhood and gifted education are not promoting the future success of the gifted child.

Economic problems in accessing resources were cited by the participants as having a negative impact upon their ability to effectively educate gifted infants and toddlers in their education and care setting. Early childhood education within Aotearoa New Zealand is regulated to promote the mechanisms of competition. The competition between centres demonstrated through the necessity to fill the centre to capacity in order to afford resources affected the participants' pedagogical practice. Limited financial funds which were directly associated to low attendance within the education and care centre restricted the teachers' access to adequate or suitable resources to promote best pedagogical practice. It has been argued that the competitive market does not result in the best educational practices for children, the teachers within this study agree with this assertion.

Additionally, best educational practice for gifted children is further marginalised due to egalitarian perspectives which contend that gifted children are advantaged, thus limiting their perception that there is the requirement for gifted children to specialised access to environments and resources. Again, the historic discursive image of the early childhood centre as aiding 'disadvantaged' children does not promote the best interests of the gifted child when the gifted child is discursively constructed as 'advantaged'. The recent promotion of the primacy of the learning for 'priority learners' by the government (New Zealand

Ministry of Education, 2014j) promotes the interests of children previously considered 'at-risk' who are repositioned as 'priority learners'. Gifted children are included in the category 'children with diverse learning needs', but the dominant discursive image of the 'advantaged' gifted child contests discursive images of the priority learner as 'at risk' from failing to attain future success.

Neoliberal discursive positioning of early childhood education and care promotes individualised benefits from early education, placing responsibility of this education upon the families of the children receiving it. The promotion of individualised benefits from education has particular ramifications for the education of gifted children. In promoting the individualised benefits of education, children with the capacity for high ability are encouraged to develop their abilities for their own personal gain, and "frenetic materialistic acquisition and self-aggrandisement" (Ambrose, 2012, p. 101). These values are in direct opposition to those promoted within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996), positioning gifted children within contesting subject positions.

The government of Aotearoa New Zealand is party to the *United Nations convention on the rights of the child* (United Nations, 1989) and therefore bound by the principles of this document including article 29.1a which states, "Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential" (United Nations, 1989, p. 9). The participants' perceive their practice to be inhibited by the lack of monetary funding, limiting their ability to develop gifted children to their fullest potential. However, the claims to 'empowerment' of individuals through discourses of 'rights' and 'social justice' must be sensitive to the ways in which this positions individuals as 'disempowered', and consequently unable to reclaim power without asking for or taking it back. This view of power is incongruent with the constant pull of forces that are considered power relations within Foucauldian theory (Deleuze, 2006).

Further education was considered necessary by the majority of the participants in order to glean more understanding to inform their advocacy for gifted infants and toddlers. The Office of the Children's Commissioner query the role the government is taking in mandating regulatory standards for infants and toddlers, contending there is a lack of teacher education requirements for teachers working with infant and toddlers, which results in many early childhood services providing low quality practice (Carroll-Lind & Angus, 2011). Some participants asserted the lack of qualifications within their team affected their exemplary practice, whereas other participants found their fully qualified team to be highly conducive to exemplary practices. Governmental policy requires 50% total qualified staff within an early childhood setting, but recent findings of the positive correlation between higher rates of qualified staff conducted in Aotearoa New Zealand (Meade et al., 2012) has reignited the debate for an increase in these requirements (Radio New Zealand News, 2013). The findings of this study support the debate for an increase.

Wong and Hansen (2012) assert that most early childhood teachers would agree with the intentions of gifted education, but insist that the lack of leadership by the NZMoE towards a common conception of giftedness results in a pedagogical paralysis. This is supported by the participants' views. However, tensions were demonstrated unifying of a concept of 'giftedness' with the socio-cultural discourse employed by the participants. Additionally, a unified and universal approach to 'giftedness' does not support post-modernist paradigms of giftedness promoted by current theorists in gifted education, and could result in a homogeneity which could exclude the abilities of many children. There are pragmatic and political consequences in constructing a common conception of giftedness, however there are also pragmatic and political consequences in rendering giftedness invisible. Governmental action guiding concepts of giftedness can begin with the initial teacher education programmes in which these problems can be debated and discursive images of giftedness deconstructed.

Given the acceptance and promotion of giftedness by the government as an actuality, there are problems with the discrepancy of governmental provision for gifted education. Governmental strategies influence parental decisions regarding the education of their young children by positioning participation in early childhood education as essential to children's future success (National Party of New Zealand, 2014b). Arguably, promoting participation within early childhood education and care infers a position of responsibility by the government to provide excellence in educational provision. Funding for education is at the discretion of the government in power, which has changed the direction and priorities of education according to the philosophical underpinnings of the party sitting in parliament, and their drive to meet the wishes of their constituent voters. The discrepancies, problems and concerns expressed by the exemplary teachers within this study are within the realm of the government to remedy.

## Limitations to the Study

It is the consideration of the researcher that there would have been more understanding of the discursive constructs of giftedness and gifted education if the parents of the children who were considered gifted by the participants were investigated for their perceptions on giftedness and the positioning of this early childhood teacher as an exemplary teacher with gifted infants and toddlers.

Additionally, it would have been beneficial to further investigate the perceptions of the individuals who nominated the participants to investigate their discursive positioning of giftedness in order to understand how they considered these participants to be considered exemplary.

While not within the scope of the study, investigation into the practices of the teachers who were nominated as exemplary, rather than their perceptions of their practices, would have revealed more information on the construction of the term exemplary.

Furthermore, comparisons to research in gifted education which identifies 'best practices' for teachers were not considered, as this was considered to be unnecessary to the consideration of the discursive construction of the term exemplary. However, comparisons between the discursive images of exemplary practice within international research, and the exemplary practice within this study would be interesting to investigate.

Many of the findings relating to the problems associated with 'giftedness' and 'infants and toddlers' were generalisable to young children as well.

As outlined earlier, there were 96 respondents to the survey with only 44 were from Aotearoa New Zealand, and 52 from other countries. More respondents from Aotearoa New Zealand would have improved the scope of interpreting dominant discourse within Aotearoa New Zealand.

## Scope for Further Investigation

There are several avenues that can be undertaken in further research from this study. Many problems were raised in the course of this thesis. I have raised them again in the bullet points below:

- There is scope for further investigation into the pedagogical practices of the teachers in early childhood education in respect to gifted children. How do early childhood teachers' practices reflect what is considered best practice for gifted children?

- Some questions need to be asked in regards to the 'priority learners' policy of NZMoE. How does positioning gifted children discursively reconstruct gifted

learners, and is this reconstruction promoted within society by NZMoE. How is this understood and interpreted by early childhood teachers? How is this understood and interpreted by parents?

- There is room for investigation into the perspectives of qualified teachers and unqualified teachers regarding giftedness within the Aotearoa New Zealand setting. Gleaning further understanding of the relationship between qualifications, the positioning of the qualified teacher as the 'expert' in relation to the unqualified worker, and how this affects their understanding and acceptance of the NZMoE's position on the actuality of giftedness

- A genealogy of giftedness within the Aotearoa New Zealand context could aid understanding of the discourses which have influenced the construction of giftedness over history.

- Further investigation into the parents discursive positioning of giftedness would enable better understanding of the power relationships between teachers who reject giftedness and parents who promote giftedness. Investigation into the perspectives of the child who is positioned as 'gifted/not gifted' in this relationship would also be very interesting.

## Final Considerations

Throughout this study 'giftedness' has proven to be a highly problematic term, with many negative discursive images and some positive. While the majority of the participants were self-proclaimed supporters of gifted education, one participant enabled insight into the perceptions of an early childhood teacher who does not promote a discursive image of the gifted child, nor promote gifted education within her practice. This participant contested the

very notion of giftedness in deference to the discursive positioning of children maintained within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) as 'confident and competent'. Investigation into this participant's perceptions enabled this study to investigate contesting discourses of giftedness that would have not been considered without her input. The views held by this teacher are representative of those identified within the wider early childhood community, where there is considerable variation in the views held regarding giftedness. The investigation into the similarities and differences between the participants has demonstrated there is a rich and vast scope for future investigation into the domain of giftedness within early childhood education.

Keen (2005) identifies the need for a common ground for early childhood educators through a shared conception of giftedness, contending that this conception should be developed by the early childhood sector within Aotearoa New Zealand. However this study asserts there are differences and similarities held between supporters of gifted education, and those who contest giftedness. The usefulness and appropriateness of the term 'gifted' may need to be debated by the early childhood community. Within educational practices, Foucault was concerned with the ability of the individual to change and be able to disassociate themselves from systems which objectify and normalise and which posit unchallenged 'truths' (Marshall, 1998). Recognition of the contesting discursive positions informing early childhood practice and giftedness must also problematised in order to rationalise whether a shared perception would benefit the early childhood domain. This debate must be tempered by the consideration that giftedness is discursively constructed within the school domain. Consequently there are considerations of the multiple subject positions that will be negotiated by children in the transition between early childhood and school. Discontinuity in the discursive construction of giftedness enables or displaces children, positioning them as normal or abnormal. Consequently, such debate about giftedness should include

representatives from the schooling sector. Additionally, this debate should be shared with gifted researchers, for if it was solely devised by members of the educational or the gifted communities, there would be no opportunities for further questioning and probing of the underpinning discourses informing each educational domain. A shared conception solely devised by early childhood educators may not consider knowledge outside of the educational domain, and may not reflect current understandings of giftedness by the wider international community. Questions regarding the creation of legitimate knowledge are being asked within the discipline of gifted education (Garces-Bacsal, 2012). There is impetus to seek alternate understandings and viewpoints regarding giftedness and gifted education practices. There is the opportunity for early childhood education to become pioneers in the construction of a new definition of giftedness.

Individuals can promote situational change, despite the ways they are constructed through power relations by discourse (Dahlberg et al., 2007, p. 32), and readdress power relations through utilisation of alternate discourses. The discourses surrounding giftedness are in a state of flux, and the field defined as "fractured, pluralised, and internally contested" (Ambrose et al., 2010, p. 463). Teachers within the field of early childhood education can engage in a working towards equitable educational opportunities for gifted infants and toddlers as for all children, and investigate the discourses of 'giftedness' to comprehend the power relationships enacted between adults and children in their construction of the term gifted.

The individuals involved in gifted education in collaboration with the government can also promote situational change through direction in policy and allocation of funds to support these investigations. As children with 'diverse learning needs' are situated as 'priority learners' by the current government (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2015b), there is the scope to explore giftedness more in order to improve learning outcomes for these priority

learners. Historic governments in Aotearoa New Zealand have marginalised opportunities to promote excellence in education. The promotion of neoliberal practices which limit governmental funding in favour of privatised market does not increase the quality of early childhood education. Currently, the contemporary National government is no different it its approach, as the marketisation of early childhood education continues. However, as the neoliberal discourse comprises an involved and active form of governance, there is the potential for promoting positive change through governmental strategies and actions. The role of the government in instigating positive change for gifted infants and toddlers hinges upon their implementation of appropriate investigations into giftedness across the sector, and resultant regulatory practice to ensure the findings of this investigation are acted upon.

Inequity in educational practice can be amended through governmental change, and through action taken within the early childhood community at an individual level. Within this local level approach is the Foucauldian notion that power extends beyond a the sovereign form of power, and can be enacted and reclaimed at a local level, 'since each individual has at his disposal a certain power, and for that very reason can also act as the vehicle for transmitting a wider power' (Foucault 1980a, p. 72).

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Community participant information sheet

Andrea Delaune

022 3011262

andrea.delaune@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

Gifted education for infants and toddlers within early childhood education centres in Aotearoa New Zealand: An insight into exemplary practice

I am a Masters of Education student at the College of Education, University of Canterbury. I am interested in developing an understanding of, and celebrating the practice of exemplary teachers of gifted infants and toddlers.

I would like to invite you to participate in my present study. If you agree to take part you will be asked to do the following:

- Complete a short online questionnaire about your perceptions regarding gifted education for children. This will take approximately 10 minutes.

- Nominate a teacher who you think is skilled in gifted education for infants and toddlers (up to the age of three years old).

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose to participate in either both or only one portion of the study, to either complete the questionnaire or to nominate the teacher. Choosing not to participate in the questionnaire will in no way impact upon the teacher nomination. Please note that not all nominations will result in participation, as the study will be limited to 5 participants to ensure feasibility.

Please also note that you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you choose to withdraw, I will do my best to remove any information relating to you, providing this is practically achievable.

You will not be identified to the teacher that you nominate, and all efforts will be made to secure your anonymity; however it is important to note that at any stage during the study it may be possible for either party to deduct who the other party is.

I will take particular care to best maximise the confidentiality of all data gathered for this study, I will also take care to protect your identity in publications of the findings. All raw data will be held securely and kept for a minimum period of 5 years following completion of the project and then destroyed

The results of this research may be used to revise and improve programmes for gifted infants and toddlers. The results may also be reported internationally at conferences and in educational journals. All participants will receive a report on the study.

This study has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. If you have any questions about the study, please contact me (details above). If you have a complaint about the study, you may contact either Judith Duncan, or the Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

My supervisor is Dr. Judith Duncan and she can be contacted at:

School of Māori, Cultural and Social Studies

University of Canterbury College of Education

P. O. Box 4800

Christchurch.

Email: judith.duncan@canterbury.ac.nz

Phone: 03 364 3466

Regards,

Andrea Delaune

022 3011262

andrea.delaune@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

# Appendix B: Community questionnaire

Please note, in constructing the questionnaire upon the Qualtrics website, there is the option for questions that are relevant to the answers supplied by the respondent to be selected, and those not relevant skipped. These options are written in italics for the purposes of this appendix, but were not visible to the respondents of the survey

## Gifted Education for infants and toddlers: Community Questionnaire

Andrea Delaune 022 3011262

andrea.delaune@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

**Gifted education for infants and toddlers within early childhood education centres in Aotearoa New Zealand: An insight into exemplary practice**

I am a Masters of Education student at the College of Education, University of Canterbury. I am interested in developing an understanding of, and celebrating the practice of exemplary teachers of gifted infants and toddlers.

I would like to invite you to participate in my present study. If you agree to take part you will be asked to do the following:

- Complete a short online questionnaire about your perceptions regarding gifted education for children. This will take approximately 10 minutes

- Nominate a teacher who you think is skilled in gifted education for infants and toddlers (up to the age of three years old).

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This study has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. If you have any questions about the study, please contact me (details above). If you have a complaint about the study, you may contact either Judith Duncan, or the Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

My supervisor is Dr. Judith Duncan and she can be contacted at:

School of Māori, Cultural and Social Studies

University of Canterbury College of Education,

P.O. Box 4800 Christchurch.

Email: judith.duncan@canterbury.ac.nz

Phone: 03 364 3466

Regards,

Andrea Delaune

022 3011262

andrea.delaune@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

**Question 1:**

Please select your level of participation in the study:

- Complete questionnaire and nominate participant

- Complete questionnaire only

- Nominate participant only

*If Nominate participant only is selected, then skip to Question 11*

**Question 2:**

What do you think the goal of gifted education is?

**Question 3:**

Do you think infants and toddlers should be identified as gifted?

Yes

No

*If "Do you think infants and toddlers should be identified as gifted?" 'Yes' is selected, go to question 4, 5, 6 then from 9 on. If "Do you think infants and toddlers should be identified as gifted?" 'No' is selected, go to Question 7, 8, and 9 on.*

**Question 4:**

At what age do you think an infant/toddler should be identified as gifted?

**Question 5:**

How do you think infants/toddlers should be identified as gifted?

**Question 6:**

Who do you think should take the lead role in identifying an infant/toddler as gifted?

**Question 7:**

Why do you think infants/toddlers should not be identified as gifted?

**Question 8:**

At what age do you think a child should be identified as gifted?

3 years

4 years

5 years

Over five years

**Question 9:**

What do you think an Early Childhood Education centre should do for a child once they are identified as gifted?

**Question 10:**

What do you think are the most important professional competencies (attributes) for a teacher working with gifted infants and toddlers?

*If "Please select your level of participation in the study: Nominate participant only" is selected, or "Please select your level of participation in the study: Complete questionnaire and nominate participant" is selected, then question 11 is displayed. If "Please select your level of participation in the study: Complete questionnaire only" is selected, skip to question 13*

**Question 11:**

Please identify the name and centre of the teacher that has shown excellence in working with gifted infants and toddlers that you would like to recommend for this study.

**Question 12:**

Please explain what it is about this teacher's practice that makes you want to nominate them.

**Question 13:**

Please indicate the cultural or ethnic group with which you identify. You may select more than one option.

- European/Pakeha or New Zealand European

- New Zealand Maori

   Tribal Iwi Affiliation (if you identify with more than one Iwi, please list them all)

   _____

- Samoan

- Cook Island Maori

- Tongan

- Niuean

- Tokelauan

- Chinese

- Indian

- Fijian

- Other Pacific Island (Please identify) _____

- Other Asian (Please identify) _____

- Other (Please identify) _____


**Question 14:**

Please indicate the personal-professional group(s) with which you identify:

- Teacher currently employed in a teaching position (Please specify the age group you

  teach) _____

- Parent of a gifted child

- Teacher educator

- Other _____


Thank you for completing the survey. Your contribution is gratefully appreciated!

Many thanks

Andrea Delaune

Telephone: 022 3011262

Email: andrea.delaune@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

# Appendix C: Teacher Information Sheet

I will take particular care to best maximise the confidentiality of all data gathered for this study, You will be asked to select a pseudonym, to ensure your anonymity, which will be used in the study report. Any data gathered will remain confidential.

All the data will be securely stored in password protected facilities and locked storage at the University of Canterbury during the course of the study and for five years following the study, and then it will be destroyed.

Any planning and assessment data collected will be viewed as a product of the teacher with the teacher as the subject and not the child. At no time will children be the subject of observation in the course of this project. Children will not be identified at any stage of the research.

**Who can I contact if I wish to ask questions or find out more information about**

**ANDREA (ANDI) DELAUNE**

Postgraduate
College of Educ
University of Canterbury

Phone: :021 1406245

E-mail: andrea.delaune@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR JUDITH DUNCAN**

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## INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

**Gifted education for infants and toddlers within early childhood education centres in Aotearoa New Zealand: An insight into exemplary practice.**

*Research conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Masters of Education*

**UC**
**UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY**
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha*
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

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## What does the study involve?

### What is the study about and why is it important?

The study will investigate perceptions of gifted education for infants and toddlers by the wider early childhood community, and examine exemplary practice of teachers of gifted infants and toddlers by investigating how these teachers perceive gifted education, and how their perceptions are reflected in their practice.

By using the information gleaned from this research, it is hoped that a clearer insight into the understandings,

If you agree to take part, you will be asked to do the following:

Participate in an initial questionnaire. The questionnaire will contain questions about your understandings of gifted and talented education; questions about how you plan for gifted children; and questions regarding aids and stressors to your praxis.

Select a sample of planning and assessment documentation to contribute to the study. You will be able to choose the assessment and planning information that you would like to contribute, and parents/whānau will be consulted for their consent to use the data in the study.

Participate in individual interviews. You will be invited to expand upon your questionnaire responses plus address any further thoughts that have arisen regarding gifted education since completing the questionnaire. I will also inquire about your planning

### Who is the researcher?

Andrea (Andi) Delaune is a teacher currently enrolled part time in the Masters of Education at the University of Canterbury. She is also currently working as an Early Childhood teacher, specialising in the care and education of infants and toddlers

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# Appendix D: Parent/ guardian information sheet

**How will my privacy be protected and how will the information from the study be**

I will take particular care to best maximise the confidentiality of all data gathered for this study, You will be asked to select a pseudonym, to ensure your anonymity, which will be used in the study report. Any data gathered will remain confidential.

All the data will be securely stored in password protected facilities and locked storage at the University of Canterbury during the course of the study and for five years following the study, and then it will be destroyed.

Any planning and assessment data collected will be viewed as a product of the teacher with the teacher as the subject and not the child. At no time will children be the subject of observation in the course of this project. Children will not be identified at any stage of the research.

**Who can I contact if I wish to ask questions or find out more information about**

**ANDREA (ANDI) DELAUNE**

Postgraduate Office
College of Education
University of Canterbury

Phone: :021 1406245

E-mail: andrea.delaune@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR JUDITH DUNCAN**

School of Māori, Cultural

and Social Studies

Phone: :03 364 3466

E-mail: judith.duncan@canterbury.ac.nz

**INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS**

**Gifted education for infants and toddlers within early childhood education centres in Aotearoa New Zealand: An insight into exemplary practice.**

*Research conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Masters of Education*

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**UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY**
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha*
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

Gifted education for infants and toddlers within early childhood education centres in Aotearoa New Zealand: An insight into exemplary practice.

## What is the study about and why is it important?

The study will investigate perceptions of gifted education for infants and toddlers by the wider early childhood community, and examine exemplary practice of teachers of gifted infants and toddlers by investigating how these teachers perceive gifted education, and how their perceptions are reflected in their practice.

By using the information gleaned from this research, it is hoped that a clearer insight into the understandings, perceptions and praxis of teachers of gifted infants and toddlers will have a positive impact upon other teachers of infants and toddlers and in turn implement positive change.

By helping me you can help improve teachers support for gifted infants and toddlers.

## What does the study involve?

If you agree to take part, you will be asked to do the following:

⇒ Consent to the teachers sharing a small sample of assessment documentation involving your child

⇒ Complete a short questionnaire about your views of gifted education.

The expected overall time frame that I will be working with the teachers is about three to five months. Please also note that you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you choose to withdraw, I will do my best to remove any information relating to you, providing this is practically achievable.

## Who is the researcher?

Andrea (Andi) Delaune is a teacher currently enrolled part time in the Masters of Education at the University of Canterbury. She is also currently working as an Early Childhood teacher, specialising in the care and education of infants and toddlers

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# Appendix E: Management information sheet

## How will my privacy be protected and how will the information from the study be

I will take particular care to best maximise the confidentiality of all data gathered for this study, You will be asked to select a pseudonym, to ensure your anonymity, which will be used in the study report. Any data gathered will remain confidential.

All the data will be securely stored in password protected facilities and locked storage at the University of Canterbury during the course of the study and for five years following the study, and then it will be destroyed.

Any planning and assessment data collected will be viewed as a product of the teacher with the teacher as the subject and not the child. At no time will children be the subject of observation in the course of this project. Children will not be identified at any stage of the research.

## Who can I contact if I wish to ask questions or find out more information about

### ANDREA (ANDI) DELAUNE

Postgraduate Office
College of Education
University of Canterbury

Phone: :021 1406245

E-mail: andrea.delaune@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

### ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR JUDITH DUNCAN

School of Māori, Cultural and Social Studies

Phone: :03 364 3466

E-mail: judith.duncan@canterbury.ac.nz

## INFORMATION FOR MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATION CENTRES

**Gifted education for infants and toddlers within early childhood education centres in Aotearoa New Zealand: An insight into exemplary practice.**

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Gifted education for infants and toddlers within early childhood education centres in Aotearoa New Zealand: An insight into exemplary practice.

**What is the study about and why is it important?**

The study will investigate perceptions of gifted education for infants and toddlers by the wider early childhood community, and examine exemplary practice of teachers of gifted infants and toddlers by investigating how these teachers perceive gifted education, and how their perceptions are reflected in their practice.

By using the information gleaned from this research, it is hoped that a clearer insight into the understandings, perceptions and praxis of teachers of gifted infants and toddlers will have a positive impact upon other teachers of infants and toddlers and in turn implement positive change.

By helping me you can help improve teachers support for gifted infants and toddlers.

**What does the study involve?**

One of your teachers is currently taking part in this study, and to gain further understanding into their practice, I would like to collect a small sample of their assessment and planning work.

This will involve:

The teacher involved in the project selecting a small example of assessment and planning they have written about a gifted infant or toddler to contribute to the research project.

Permission from the parents for the use of the planning and assessment documentation will also be sought.

Please note that any data collected in this manner will be viewed as a product of the teacher with the teacher as the subject and not the child. At no time will children be the subject of observation in the course of this project. Children will not be identified at any stage of the research. The expected overall time frame that I will be working with the teachers is about three to five months. Please also note that you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you choose to withdraw, I will do my best to remove any information relating to you, providing this is practically achievable.

If you have any questions or comments anytime, please do not hesitate to contact me or my thesis Supervisor , Associate Professor Judith Duncan. Contact details on the reverse of this pamphlet.

**Who is the researcher?**

Andrea (Andi) Delaune is a teacher currently enrolled part time in the Masters of Education at the University of Canterbury. She is also currently working as an Early Childhood teacher, specialising in the care and education of infants and toddlers

## Appendix F: Summary of information supplied to Facebook groups

**To English speaking groups:**

Kia Ora from New Zealand,

I am a Masters of Education student at the College of Education, University of Canterbury, New Zealand. We all know how important research into gifted education is, and I am seeking your help to conduct research to further our understanding of gifted education for very young children. I am interested in developing an understanding of, and celebrating the practice of exemplary teachers of gifted infants and toddlers.

I would be very grateful if you could visit and circulate the following questionnaire link.

http://canterbury.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_bOtU0TFC1TuVLRb

The questionnaire involves:

· Completing a short online questionnaire about your perceptions regarding gifted education for infants, todders and young children. This will take approximately 10 minutes.

· Nominating a teacher who you think is skilled in gifted education for infants and toddlers (up to the age of three years old).

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose to participate in either both or only one portion of the study, to either complete the questionnaire or to nominate the teacher.

This study has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. If you have any questions about the study, please contact me. If you have a complaint about the study, you may contact either Judith Duncan, or the Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

My supervisor is Dr. Judith Duncan and she can be contacted at:

School of Māori, Cultural and Social Studies

University of Canterbury College of Education

P. O. Box 4800

Christchurch.

Email: judith.duncan@canterbury.ac.nz

Phone:        03 364 3466

Thanks all!

Andrea Delaune

       0064 22 3011262

andrea.delaune@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

**To French speaking groups:**

Bonjour,

Veuillez excuser mon français, je suis en train d'apprendre à parler et écrire en français!

Je suis une étudiante à la maîtrise à l'Université de Canterbury, je fais des recherches sur l'éducation pour les enfants precoces.

S'il vous plaît prendre un moment pour remplir mon enquête. Il est en anglais, mais je suis vraiment intéressé dans une perspective internationale.

Merci

Andrea Delaune


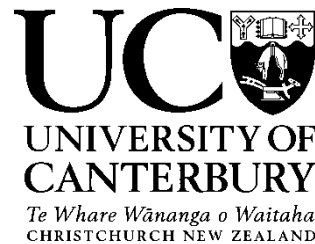http://canterbury.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_bOtU0TFC1TuVLRb


## Appendix G: Teacher participant questionnaire

Telephone: 021 069 2145

Email: andrea.delaune@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

1st July 2013


Gifted education for infants and toddlers within early childhood education centres in Aotearoa New Zealand: An insight into exemplary practice.

# Questionnaire for Participants


The purpose of this questionnaire is to gain your insight into your perspectives regarding gifted education. Your opinions are very important in this project. Please take the time to complete the questions as honestly as you can. You may pass on any question that you do not wish to answer.

Thank you for your time.

**Ethnic Origin(s)**

Please indicate the cultural or ethnic group(s) with which you identify.

☐ European/Pakeha or New Zealand European

☐ New Zealand Māori Tribal Affiliation (Iwi)

If you identify with more than one Iwi, please list them all.

_____

☐ Samoan

☐ Cook Island Māori☐

☐ Tongan

☐ Niuean

☐ Tokelauan

☐ Chinese

☐ Indian

☐ Fijian

☐ Other Pacific Island (please specify)

_____

☐ Other Asian (please specify)

_____

☐ Other (please specify)

_____

**What ignited your interest in gifted education for children?**

**What is the goal of gifted education?**


**How should children be identified as gifted?**


**When should children be identified as gifted? Why have you chosen this age?**


**Who should identify gifted children?**


**What do you do for a child when you suspect they are gifted?**


**What do you believe the education centre should do for a child once they are suspected to be gifted?**


**What are the most important professional competencies for a teacher working with gifted infants and toddlers?**


**How do you extend a gifted infant or toddler's interests and further the infant or toddler's knowledge?**


**Which theorists impact most upon your pedagogical philosophy?**


**Which professional readings do you think have most significantly influenced your practice? These could be specific to gifted education or any pedagogical readings.**

**What are your views on the development of children, and the development of gifted children?**


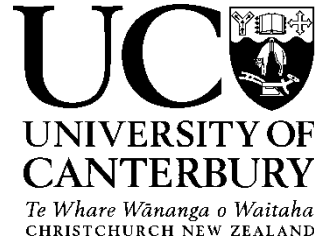**Is there anything else you would like to add?**


Thank you for your time ☺

**Appendix H: Interview format sheet for teacher participants:**

# Interview Details:

Telephone: 021 069 2145

Email:
andrea.delaune@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

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**Timeframe:** The interview will be 45 minutes maximum. The interview will be electronically recorded.

There will be a welcome, and you will need to identify yourself for the recording. The equipment will be checked, and then the interview will proceed. You will be given this copy of the questions to refer to during the interview.

The following questions will be used to guide the interview:

**How would you describe best practice for gifted infants and toddlers (this could include planning, assessment, praxis, pastoral care and/or any other area you deem to be important).**

**How do you implement a plan and assess for gifted infant and toddler's learning?**

**What implications do differing cultural concepts of giftedness have upon your teaching practice with a gifted infant/toddler?**

**How do you understand *Te Whāriki* to impact upon your praxis, planning and assessment for gifted infants and toddlers?**

**What pedagogical theory/theories have had a significant impact upon you as a teacher for gifted infants and toddlers? Can you explain how and why?**

**How do these theories impact upon your planning and assessment for gifted infants and toddlers?**

Further questions may be asked as you respond, and further clarification is needed on a statement or point that you have made. Further questions may be asked regarding the questionnaire, or planning and assessment information that you provided. At the conclusion, you will be reminded of the confidentiality requirements and their right of withdrawal. You will also be reminded that they are able to contact the researcher at any stage for further information, or in the case of any issues or concerns.

You will be informed of when you will receive a transcript of the interview, and the time frame to contact the researcher to clarify or omit any points made during the interview.

You will be thanked for your time. ☺

# Appendix I: Teacher participant consent form

Telephone: 021 1406245

Email: andrea.delaune@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

1<sup>st</sup> July 2013

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## Consent form for teacher participants

I have been given a full explanation of this project and have been given an opportunity to ask questions.

I understand what will be required of me if I agree to take part in this project.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any stage without penalty.

I understand that personal information that I choose to include in the questionnaire or interview may be referred to, without identifying me, in the research report.

I understand that any published or reported results will not identify me.

I understand that I will be able to check the transcript of my interview for accuracy of what was said, and that I have power of clarification over any statements made in the interview.

The interview is semi-structured, which means that the course of the discussion cannot be determined. I understand that I may decline to answer any particular question that arises.

I understand that all data collected for this study will be kept in locked and secure facilities at the University of Canterbury and will be destroyed after five years.

I understand that I will receive a report on the findings of this study. I have provided my email details below for this.

I understand that if I require further information I can contact the researcher, Andrea Delaune. If I have any complaints, I can contact Dr Judith Duncan or the

Chair of the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.

By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Email address: _____

# Appendix J: Management consent form

Telephone: 021 140 6245

Email: andrea.delaune@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

1st July 2013

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## Consent form for Managers of Education centres

The management of the Education centre has been given a full explanation of this project and have been given an opportunity to ask questions.

The management of the Education Centre understands what will be required if they agree to take part in this project.

The management of the Education centre understands that their participation is voluntary and that they may withdraw at any stage without penalty. The Education centre's identity will be protected in the publications from the research.

The management of the Education centre understands that all data collected for this study will be kept in locked and secure facilities at the University of Canterbury and will be destroyed after five years.

The management of the Education centre understands that all assessment and planning documentation is being collected as a product of the teacher, not to be studied with the child as a subject. At no time will children be the subject of observation in the course of this project. Children will not be identified at any stage of the research.

The management of the Education centre understands that parental consent will be sought for access to the planning and assessment documentation.

The management of the Education centre understands that they will receive a report on the findings of this study. The management of the Education centre have provided their email details below for this.

The management of the Education centre understands that if they require further information they can contact the researcher, Andrea Delaune. If the management of the Education centre have any complaints, they can contact Dr Judith Duncan or

the Chair of the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.

By signing below, the management of the Education centre agrees to participate in this research project.

Name: _____
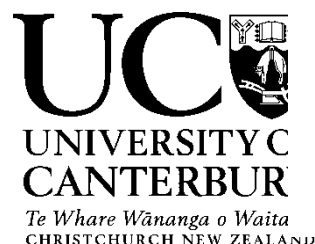
Date: _____

Signature: _____

Email address: _____

# Appendix K: Parent and Whānau consent form:

Telephone: 021 1406245

Email: andrea.delaune@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

1st July 2013

Gifted education for infants and toddlers within

early childhood education centres in Aotearoa New Zealand: An insight into

exemplary practice.

## Consent form for parents/guardians

I have been given a full explanation of this project and have been given an opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any stage without penalty.

I understand that personal information that is included in the assessment and planning data will not be used in the research report.

I understand that all assessment and planning documentation is being collected as a product of the teacher, not to be studied with the child as a subject. At no time will children be the subject of observation in the course of this project. Children will not be identified at any stage of the research.

I understand that all data collected for this study will be kept in locked and secure facilities at the University of Canterbury and will be destroyed after five years.

I understand that I will receive a report on the findings of this study. I have provided my email details below for this.

I understand that if I require further information I can contact the researcher, Andrea Delaune. If I have any complaints, I can contact Dr Judith Duncan or the Chair of the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.

By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.


Name(s): _____

Date: _____

Signature(s): _____

Email address: _____