“IF I’M ASKING MORE QUESTIONS THAN GIVING ANSWERS THEN IT’S A LOT MORE EMPOWERING” – LEARNING ABOUT AND IMPLEMENTING A COACHING APPROACH IN EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements

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By

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Abstract

Aligning with inclusive, participatory, and family-centred approaches, coaching is a practice of interest in early childhood intervention (ECI) both globally and locally. Aotearoa New Zealand's Early Intervention Practice Framework outlines expectations for the use of coaching with parents and early childhood educators as members of the ECI team, however practical tools to support learning about the practice are few. A small but growing body of literature in coaching in ECI exists, but data in professional learning and implementation are limited, particularly outside of North America. The purpose of this study therefore, was to gain further insight into the adoption and implementation of coaching by ECI professionals in the socio-cultural context of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Using a qualitative descriptive approach, semi-structured interviews were held with 15 ECI professionals who described themselves as either emerging or practising Early Intervention Teachers, or as involved in the support or management of Early Intervention Teacher practice. Thematic analysis was applied to the interview transcripts to identify key themes. Supplementary documentary analysis of legislative, policy and practice documents was utilised for triangulation where required.

Key findings of the study showed that participants were ready to learn about coaching according to five areas of readiness: professional background, relevance of coaching, interest and motivation, knowledge of coaching, and the learning context. Participants' learning was supported by people, events, tools and resources, and the transactions that occurred between these entities. In addition, participants mentioned psychological learning mechanisms that pertained to seeking or becoming aware of new knowledge, and making sense of this within the workplace context. Professional learning in McWilliam's routines-based early intervention and routines-based interview was also reported to support learning about coaching.

Participants generally agreed that coaching was a facilitative practice with four key underpinning principles, humanistic, relational, conversational, and solution-focused. They also agreed that it differed from supervision, consulting and mentoring in most cases, but there were conflicting reports about the place of modelling, imitation and instruction in the coaching process. Finally, while many participants had trialled coaching, few were implementing it in everyday practice, and the majority perceived themselves to have emergent coaching skills. Key challenges limiting coaching implementation were identified as relating to the ECI context, the practice of coaching, professional learning, and the professional and their practice.

This study contributes to ECI coaching research as one of few that describes professional learning in some depth, and accounts for the range of mechanisms involved. It also offers insights into ECI professionals' understandings of coaching as part of learning how to coach, which up until now have been largely under-investigated. The study confirms and adds to current understandings of coaching implementation challenges. Findings suggest further qualitative and quantitative studies in professional learning, understandings, and implementation of coaching are required.

Publications arising from this thesis

Mataiti, H., van Bysterveldt, A., & Miller, J. (2016). Changing roles and responsibilities: the development of coaching in early intervention education settings, in Aotearoa New Zealand. *NZ Research in ECE Journal, Special Issue: Equality and Diversity, 19*, 12 - 24.

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Mataiti, H., & van Bysterveldt, A. (2016, September). *Partnership and coaching in early childhood intervention*. Poster presented at the New Zealand Speech-language Therapists' Association (NZSTA) Conference, Auckland, New Zealand. Retrieved from https://ir.canterbury.ac.nz/handle/10092/15066

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GLOSSARY

ako	to learn, reciprocal learning
Aotearoa	literally the Land of the Long White Cloud, New Zealand
kaitakawaenga	Māori cultural worker, mediator, arbitrator
kaupapa	purpose, topic, guiding principles, philosophy
kete	basket, kit
Māori	Indigenous person/people of Aotearoa New Zealand
Te Whāriki	the New Zealand Ministry of Education Early Childhood Curriculum, literally means 'the woven mat'
tuakana-teina	a supportive learning relationship between an older and more experienced, and younger, less experienced person, traditionally between brothers, sisters, or cousins
whānau	family, nuclear/extended family

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EC	Early Childhood
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECI	Early Childhood Intervention
EIAANZ	Early Intervention Association of Aotearoa New Zealand
EPIC	Embedded Practices and Intervention with Caregivers
FPM	Family Partnership Model
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoH	Ministry of Health
RBEI	Routines-Based Early Intervention
RBI	Routines-Based Interview

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Dedication

In loving memory of my uncle Gary Charles Kirkus

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Background

Coaching is a non-clinical change-supporting practice which takes place between a coach and coachee (Cox, Bachkirova, & Clutterbuck, 2014; Flaherty, 1999; Green & Spence, 2014; Williams, 2004). Although coaching can be a professional occupation in its own right, it is also utilised in a range of helping professions as a conversation-based practice tool, and has been employed in education settings to facilitate the learning and development of children and young people, their parents and caregivers, and educators and managers (Fletcher & Mullen, 2012). There are several reasons why coaching is viewed as an important practice for early childhood intervention (ECI) professionals to utilise in their work with families, early childhood (EC) educators, and ECI team members, particularly its alignment with inclusive, participatory, and family-centred approaches.

Globally, over the past 30 to 40 years, there has been a shift in the way education, disability, families, and childhood are conceptualised, which has influenced the approach and delivery of educational practices (Carrington & MacArthur, 2012; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1997; R. Smith, 2013; Turnbull, 2011). In some countries, such as Aotearoa New Zealand, there have been philosophical changes towards the acceptance of diversity and inclusion of all citizens in society, including in education (Carrington & MacArthur, 2012). Trusting, respectful collaboration with families and between professionals is one factor believed to support the inclusion of children in early childhood education (ECE) environments (Carrington & MacArthur, 2012; Foster-Cohen & van Bysterveldt, 2016; Purdue 2009; Soodak et al., 2002). Coaching is recognised as a collaborative practice that has a role to play in supporting inclusion (Alliston, 2007; Devore, Miolo, & Hader, 2011).

In ECI, a change in focus away from "direct therapy" approaches (Hanft, Rush, & Shelden, 2004, p. 11) to practices that support the participation of children and families in their communities, has also occurred (Campbell & Sawyer, 2007; Early Childhood Intervention Australia, 2017). Participation-based practices such as coaching involve ECI professionals working with parents or educators rather than the child, to facilitate learning opportunities for the child in "naturally occurring routines (e.g. mealtimes) or activities (e.g., playing on a playground; riding in the car; shopping)" in homes, ECE, and community settings (Campbell & Sawyer, 2007, p. 289). In theory, this approach bypasses the need for a therapeutic 'generalisation' of new skills, as they are already learned and embedded in a meaningful setting (Hanft et al., 2004). Therefore, the need for buy-in from parents and educators is circumnavigated, and positive outcomes and experiences for children and families are increased.

As a participation-based practice that is part of a wider shift away from traditional direct therapy ECI services, coaching also allows the enactment of family-centred principles. Family-centred practices are based on the premise that families have a critical role in their child's wellbeing, learning and development, and that this role can be supported by a particular way of helping. Informed by theories of ecological systems, family systems, attachment, help-giving, empowerment, and social support (Sukkar, Dunst, & Kirby, 2016), family-centred practices are strengths-focused and capacity-building, and promote self-determination and empowerment through interdependent partnership with professionals (Alliston, 2007; Ministry of Education (MoE), 2011a; Sukkar et al., 2016). The effective communication that is integral to coaching strongly aligns with that which is required in family-centred practice (Rush & Shelden, 2011).

Two main documents are likely to have precipitated interest in coaching in ECI in Aotearoa New Zealand (for an overview of ECI in the Aotearoa New Zealand context, please see Appendix A). Firstly, in a review of literature in the principles and practices of ECI, Alliston (2007) outlined

the collaborative practice of coaching, in the *Teaming and Collaboration* section (pages 72-73). This material was informed by the research of Rush, Shelden, and Hanft (2003). Secondly, illuminated by Alliston's earlier review, the Early Intervention Practice Framework (MoE, 2011a) showed coaching to be a preferred practice. In particular, the framework directly referenced the work of Rush et al. (2003), which described coaching as a means for embedding intervention in everyday environments in place of more traditional, direct ECI services. In addition, under heading *3.5.1 Teaming model* (page 9), the framework referred to the effective communication necessary when coaching members of the ECI team. This second statement implied a coaching approach was expected to be in use.

Teaming is one of six key principles identified from international and local evidence and outlined in the Early Intervention Practice Framework. The other principles are: intervene early, and inclusive, family-centred, and culturally responsive practices, delivered in natural environments. Although it is the principle of teaming through which the idea of coaching was introduced in the Aotearoa New Zealand context, the practice also aligns strongly with the principles of intervention in natural environments, and family-centred practice as outlined above.

Further, although the framework included some reference to coaching, no specific policy or training guideline in coaching accompanied the practice document. Later, MoE public advertising material identified coaching as one of the ways an early intervention teacher works with families, whānau and EC educators (MoE, 2015). However, little information was shared about how or to what extent this process took place, nor was there any indication of other explanatory material being offered to prospective coaches and coachees.

1.2 Presenting Issue and Research Purpose

In 2013, I worked as an academic learning facilitator in the Early Intervention endorsement of the Specialist Teaching programme (a professional learning initiative between the University of Canterbury and Massey University of New Zealand, for the MoE). During this time, it came to my attention that those working in ECI services in Aotearoa New Zealand were moving toward facilitative approaches when working with families. The move appeared to be a response to both theoretical and empirical evidence in early years' research and the then-current socio-political climate. I was also made aware that requests had been made the previous year by the MoE as key stakeholder and contract owner, for coaching content to be included in the Early Intervention foundation course for those studying toward an ECI qualification in Specialist Teaching (personal communication, 2013).

Within my role I was confronted by a need to incorporate coaching information into existing online professional learning content while also recognising that there was limited evidence that coaching was effective, especially in Aotearoa New Zealand. I was, therefore, interested in gaining some local knowledge about its use nationally.

I noted at this time that aside from training in behavioural sciences and counselling, there seemed to be few formal professional learning opportunities for ECI professionals to develop their coaching skills. From this early exploration, I realised that more effective professional learning opportunities needed to be on offer for coaching to be successfully implemented in practice. I also believed that if ECI professionals were to be working with families and educators in facilitative and collaborative ways such as coaching rather than using a traditional expert-driven model, then it was important to get the new practice right. To better understand the professional learning mechanisms that were required, I recognised the need to start at the beginning and

broadly investigate what and how individual emerging and experienced ECI professionals were learning about coaching, and how they were applying it in practice within their everyday work.

I chose this area of study because I became aware there were inadequate data in how ECI professionals were developing theoretical understandings and practical capabilities through professional learning, to apply coaching in the work they carry out with families, educators and other professionals in natural learning environments. With limited record of this, a significant gap existed in knowledge about the adoption and implementation of coaching in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The purpose of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding about the adoption and implementation of the practice of coaching by ECI professionals in ECI in Aotearoa New Zealand. I planned to do this in three main ways. Firstly to gain insight into the formal and informal professional learning that had occurred in both in-service and pre-service settings. Secondly, to determine what theoretical knowledge is held by ECI professionals about ECI coaching. And, thirdly, to identify the kinds of implementation of coaching that have occurred in field-based settings.

1.3 Underlying Assumptions

The study was carried out based on two main areas of assumption. These concern underlying assumptions about ECI, and the existence of effective help-giving.

Globally, ECI is based on evidence that shows 1) early supports (from birth) lead to improved later outcomes for children and families; 2) human potential is not conditionally dependent on inbuilt biological factors and can reach beyond periods that are considered critically important; 3) services are delivered collaboratively by a range of diverse professional disciplines across sectors, who design supports and programmes that respond to characteristics of the child and

family, and 4) the child is not viewed in isolation but in the context of their family, community, and broader socio-cultural or ecological context (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Bruder, 2010; Reichow, Boyd, Barton, & Odom, 2016; Shonkoff & Meisels, 2000). Any coaching that occurs with parents and family members, EC educators or between ECI professionals, is carried out based on this evidence.

While research on the effectiveness of coaching in terms of child and family outcomes remains limited, this study has been carried out under the assumption that the practice aligns with the principles of effective help-giving. Informed by research, effective help-giving has been comprehensively outlined in Dunst and Trivette (1988, 1996). Key principles include help-giving being more effective when interactions are warm and positive, the recipient has a choice in accepting the help offered and is held responsible for solutions, and that decision-making is shared. In addition, help is better received if attainment of tasks is experienced positively, and that it increasingly leads to a sense of competence and need for less help (Dunst & Trivette, 1988, 1996).

1.4 Terminology

The terms professional development and professional learning are sometimes used interchangeably in research. However drawing on adult learning literature where adult *development* concerns the performance and mastery of externally constructed competencies with a focus on the transfer of knowledge through mostly cognitive means, and adult *learning* is socially situated, and involves the expansion of knowledge by an active learner through experience and reflection across time (Dewey, 1938; Parsloe & Leedham, 2009; Schunk, 2012; K. Smith, 2017), there are some distinctive differences between the two. In the current study I have chosen to use the term professional learning to mean both development and learning, but from the perspective that the professional takes an active learning role, and that the learning that

occurs may be through either formal curricula or programming with associated regulations, assessment and competencies, or less formal means (Webster-Wright, 2009).

1.5 Thesis Outline

This thesis comprises seven main chapters. A brief outline of these follows.

Chapter One contains an introduction to the thesis including contextual background, the presenting issue and research purpose, key assumptions, terminology, and an outline of the thesis chapters.

Chapter Two presents a comprehensive review of the current research literature in ECI coaching, in three main parts. Firstly it describes the understandings of coaching, including historical background, theoretical underpinnings, definitions, critical aspects, and impacts. Secondly, it reviews literature in the implementation of coaching, including factors which are influential in its application. Thirdly, it examines literature in professional learning in coaching, including material in effective professional learning, professional learning in Aotearoa New Zealand, and professional learning in coaching from evaluative and empirical sources. A critical overview of the chapter and a conclusion itemising key research questions are included at the end.

Chapter Three includes detail about the methodology and methods used for this research. In particular this chapter covers the positioning of the research study, research design, methods, participants and sampling, the research process, analysis and interpretation, ethical considerations, and how study rigour was ensured.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six each present findings which address the individual research questions outlined at the end of the Literature Review. While convention would be for a separate discussion chapter to follow the findings chapters, in this thesis, for clarity's sake, discussion in

relation to relevant literature is included at the end of each findings chapter. Chapter Four presents findings and discussion about how ECI professionals are learning about coaching. Chapter Five focuses on participants' understandings of coaching. Chapter Six concentrates on the implementation of coaching and its perceived challenges.

Chapter Seven presents a conclusion to the study by outlining research contributions, and limitations, and future directions for research and practice.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

This chapter is an overview of literature in coaching in ECI from global and local contexts. In particular, three main areas of research are examined. Firstly, a range of theoretical, practice-based, and empirical sources of what coaching is understood to be will be reviewed. Secondly, literature in the implementation of coaching in ECI will be outlined. Thirdly, research in professional learning in coaching in ECI will be presented. These reviews are preceded by an explanation of the search methods and followed by an analytical overview, and conclusion of the chapter.

2.1 Search Methods

The aim was to achieve a comprehensive review of coaching and its implementation in ECI, affording some breadth and depth. No date restrictions were placed on searches which enabled the review to capture the emergence of practical and empirical studies of ECI coaching spanning at least three decades. Completing the review involved ongoing cycles of searching, reading and writing (Ridley, 2008) and layers of search strategies to identify sources. These included combinations of comprehensive searching with selective citation, representative citation, and selection of central resources from bibliographic searches (Booth, Papaioannou, & Sutton, 2012; Cooper, 1985; Randolph, 2009; Ridley, 2008). Books, journal and review articles, and 'grey' literature (Ridley, 2008) were accessed through public search domains and obtained in either hard copy or e-copy.

Coaching materials were gathered via catalogue, specific database, and cross-database online search tools through the University of Canterbury library website. Coaching journals (e.g.

Coaching: an International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice) and texts were scanned for information relevant to theory and professional learning and development. Coaching research specific to ECI was found by searching and cross-checking results from databases, including Education Research Complete, EBSCOhost, Web of Science, PsycInfo, and PubMed. ECI coaching practice documents and guidelines were obtained through Google internet searches. Search terms used were either coach*, coaching, caregiver coaching, collaborative consultation; combined with any of - early*, early intervention, early childhood, early childhood intervention, early years, preschool, or 0 - 6 years. Given the cross-sector nature of ECI, articles from paediatric health and ECE settings were included. In particular, searches of specific journals such as *Child: Care, Health & Development*, *Child Development*, *Clinical Paediatrics*, *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *Infants & Young Children*, *Journal of Early Intervention*, *International Journal of Early Years Education*, *Journal of Early Childhood Special Education, and Young Exceptional Children* were undertaken.

In addition, across a four year period up to July 2020, an online notification system through Google Scholar was utilised to find new published literature, including both research articles and texts (search terms: coaching AND early*). Google internet searches were also undertaken where further gaps in knowledge were evident, for example, where necessary professional organisations and specific authors researching in the field were individually investigated to uncover relevant academic sources. Finally, part or full dissertations and theses in coaching in ECI available online were included for review, as in some cases these represented the most recent knowledge generated in the field.

2.2 Understandings about Coaching

This section focuses on understanding what coaching is in terms of its historical background, theoretical underpinnings, definitions, critical aspects, and impacts. Given the

relatively small body of empirical studies in coaching in ECI, sources from outside of the sector have also been consulted to help gain appropriate detail about the practice.

2.2.1. Historical background. Historically, the word 'coach' meant a horse-drawn or motorised carriage; however, in the early 1800s it became the name given to a tutor who helped students to pass exams (Bachkirova, Cox & Clutterbuck, 2014; Brock, 2014; Clutterbuck & Turner, 2018). Later, the term appeared in sporting contexts. It has also been used in early commercial settings in reference to false bidding to increase auction prices of worthless goods, and in farming where a tame animal was used to guide a wild one into captivity ('coach', Oxford English Dictionary, 2018). Lexically speaking, coaching represents a way someone or something can be supported by an entity, to move to a desired or improved situation. Narrowed down to a single fundamental, coaching is about change (Green & Spence, 2014; Hicks, 2017).

Multiple influences are said to have contributed to the wider development of coaching. These include philosophical, cultural, and socio-political movements, key individuals, relationships, locations, and published sources (Bachkirova et al., 2014; Brock, 2010, 2014; Wildflower, 2013). Credited in particular are the works of the great Eastern and Western philosophers; biological science; psychological schools of thought; psychotherapy and counselling; self-help movements; large group awareness training and neuro-linguistic programming; high performance sports such as golf, tennis and motor racing with Gallwey's and Whitmore's knowledge-bases respectively; as well as supervision, adult learning and mentoring (Bachkirova et al., 2014; Brock, 2010, 2014; Wildflower, 2013).

2.2.2 Theoretical underpinnings. Being able to link the practical application of coaching to its theoretical roots highlights the potential validity of the practice even when its effectiveness has not been comprehensively evaluated by empirical means (Bachkirova, Spence, & Drake,

2017; Cavanagh, Grant, & Kemp, 2005). As outlined above, coaching is linked to multiple disciplines, each of which has their own theoretical underpinnings. Bachkirova (2017) suggests this means that the background theory influencing coaching is most likely to be informed by the discipline with which the individual coach or researcher aligns themself. In their EC coaching handbook, for example, Rush and Shelden (2011) outline behavioural, humanistic, cognitive, goal-focused, and adult learning theories as influential.

There is general agreement that learning theory contributes important foundational concepts to coaching. Learning theories most commonly identified are Knowles' andragogy (theory of adult learning), Kolb's experiential learning, and Mezirow's transformative learning (Bachkirova et al., 2014; Bennett & Campone, 2017; Cox, 2006, 2015; Rush & Shelden, 2011). Andragogy is based on the notion that the learning of adults is uniquely different from that of children. It has six foundational concepts which show adult learning to be contingent upon "(1) the learner's need to know, (2) self-concept of the learner, (3) prior experience of the learner, (4) readiness to learn, (5) orientation to learning, and (6) motivation to learn" (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015, pp. 4-5). Experiential learning theory sees learning as a process of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). These aspects are recognisable in coaching models such as Whitmore's GROW model (Fazel, 2013). Transformative learning involves shifts in thinking about one's own "taken-for-granted frames of reference" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 7), through processes of exploration, critical reflection, recognition of discontent and transformation, planning, and reintegration. Transformed beliefs then guide the new actions with which they align.

Psychological schools of thoughts are also commonly understood to influence coaching. It is beyond the scope of this review to look at psychological underpinnings in detail, however an overview of a range of influencing approaches and theories follows. Examples include

psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioural, solution-focused, and transpersonal approaches (Cox et al., 2014). More specific psychological theories discussed in coaching literature are attachment (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Critchley, 2010); self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982), self-determination (Baldwin et al., 2013; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000), trans-theoretical (Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992), self-concordant goal-striving (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999; Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001), and self-regulation or self-control (Carver & Scheier, 2002). Principles of humanistic theory commonly utilised in psychotherapies inform coaching too (de Haan & Sills, 2012; Stober, 2006). Humanistic approaches contribute a focus on growth and self-actualisation (Maslow, 1962), authenticity and congruence, choice and responsibility, a holistic view of the person, and a professional-client relationship which is collaborative in nature and characterised by empathy, and unconditional positive regard (Stober, 2006).

2.2.3 Definitions. This section describes general definitions of coaching, and those that have evolved in the ECI coaching context before examining the debate surrounding definitions of coaching in ECI.

General definition of coaching. Over the past thirty years multiple descriptions and definitions of coaching have been present in the wider literature. Outside of ECI, coaching has been labelled a relationship and a process (de Haan & Gannon, 2017; Green & Spence, 2014), a methodology (Flaherty, 1999; Grant, 2014, p. xiii; Hicks, 2017); and an overall culture (van Nieuwerburgh & Passmore, 2012). Both specific models of coaching (for example GROW - Goal, Reality, Options, Will) (Whitmore, 2009) and conversation-based approaches exist, making it highly accessibility in the mainstream and commonly used as a way of communicating across disciplines and workplaces (Bachkirova & Kauffman, 2009; Grant, 2017).

In the 1990s, coaching in the wider context was considered an instructional practice which involved “providing feedback, prescribing and observing practice sequences, and giving advice

and support…during actual job performance" (Champion et al., 1990, p. 67). More recent literature generally supports the notion that coaching is carried out between two adult participants – the coach and coachee, and involves both communication and action (Green & Spence, 2014). The coach uses techniques such as acknowledging, active listening and questioning, to support the coachee to develop and work on a pathway toward their own desired performance or outcome by exposing the coachee's potential to themselves through reflective processes (Bamford et al., 2012; Baron & Morin, 2009; Cox et al., 2014; Green & Spence, 2014; International Coach Federation (ICF), 2008, 2020; Whitmore, 2009). The self-responsible coachee is open to change and takes action toward the desired outcome, meeting with the coach at regular intervals to reflect and evaluate progress (Bamford et al., 2012; Green & Spence, 2014; ICF, 2008, 2020). If current methods of working toward outcomes are ineffective, then adapting goals or activities could be necessary, which may include the coach skilfully challenging the coachee to account for actions taken (ICF, 2008, 2020).

Defining coaching in ECI. As coaching is not a new practice to ECI, various definitions have been in existence over the past 30 years. It gained attention in the 1980s (Gallacher, 1997) and has been described both in form and by label since then. For example, Barrera and Rosenbaum's (1986) early description of a transactional parent education model in ECI, closely resembles a practice that looks like coaching:

> "The intervention process involves a problem-solving model of education, whereby parents acquire cognitive strategies for assessing the needs of their child and for designing a program to fulfil these needs. Its main objective … is self-motivated learning and active participation in every step of the intervention. Active participation and learning throughout the intervention process allow parents to have control of the implementation of every aspect of intervention; they also prepare parents to deal with the

> medical/educational community and society in general, in order to obtain better services for their children." (p. 128)

Of note, is a focus on problem solving in order to cope with future situations; expectation for learning and action; and that the loci of control is positioned with the parent.

Half a decade later, McCollum's (1991) definition of parent-child interaction coaching highlighted the aim of expanding parental awareness and active experimentation with strategies. Later, Gallacher (1995, 1997) focused on coaching for ECI professionals' professional development purposes. A process-based coaching model consisting of "initial interest", "planning", "information gathering", "analysis", "conferencing", and "coaching review" as key components, was introduced (Gallacher, 1995, p. 30). The alignment of coaching with other practices and its strong potential for use in ECI contexts was noted at the time, particularly in relation to ECI professionals' work with families and EC educators (Gallacher, 1997; McCollum, 1991).

Significantly, across the 2000s, Hanft, Rush, and Shelden re-visited the idea of coaching in ECE & ECI contexts (Hanft et al., 2004; Rush et al., 2003; Rush & Shelden, 2008, 2011; Shelden & Rush, 2001, 2005). Rush et al. (2003) summarised coaching as:

> "an interactive process of observation and reflection in which the coach promotes a parent's or other care provider's ability to support a child's participation in everyday experiences and interactions with family members and peers across settings" (p. 33)

Later, a revised definition was offered by Rush and Shelden, in which coaching was outlined as an:

> "adult learning strategy used for talking with parents and other care providers, to recognise what they are already doing that works to support child learning and development, as well as building upon existing or new ideas… individuals using coaching

> start with what the other person knows and is doing in order to develop and implement a joint plan that meets the needs and priorities of the person being supported through coaching" (Rush & Shelden, 2008, p. 1)

Both Rush et al. (2003) and Rush and Shelden (2008) refer to coaching as a process of learning or discovery, which remains a focus of ECI coaching to date. For example, the Colorado Consortium (2009, p. 2) and Utah Office of Childcare (2014, p. 2) state:

> "coaching is a learning process based on a collaborative relationship that is intentionally designed to promote sustainable growth in the necessary attitudes, skills, and knowledge to effectively implement the best practices for the development of young children and their families"

The above definitions of coaching in ECI are comparable to those from the wider coaching context, with specific foci on learning and working toward goals to build on current capacities. In addition, the identification of words such as interaction, communication, and collaboration across more recent definitions emphasise exchanges based in the coaching relationship.

Debate about definition. Despite these apparently clear definitions, there is also a great deal of confusion in defining coaching present in the ECI literature. Kemp and Turnbull (2014) urge the need for a "universal definition" of coaching in ECI, either delineating a relationship-focused, facilitative practice from one that is "intervener-directed" (p. 323), or agreeing that both aspects are needed. Kemp and Turnbull (2014) allude to instructional coaching being more aligned with historical methods of family interaction in ECI, such as parent training. Akhbari Ziegler and Hadders-Algra (2020) similarly suggest the term coaching should be retained for "relationship-directed, family-centred" interventions (p. 569), whilst professionally-directed approaches should be considered "parent training" (p. 570). Coaching models and approaches which are considerably more professionally-directed include instructional and bug-in-ear or in-

vivo (i.e. real-time feedback with or without a wireless ear piece), and are comparatively prevalent in research literature. In contrast, Rush and Shelden (2011) indicate that coaching involves doing what is needed, and make room in their EC coaching approach for strategies which are intervener-directed such as modelling. One aspect needing further clarification is how the coach facilitates coachee learning, and the extent to which the ECI professional is responsible for directing the coaching process. Lack of a universal coaching definition gives rise to uncertainty amongst students who are attempting to understand and use coaching in their practice.

2.2.4 Comparing coaching with other practices. To further determine what coaching is, it is useful to explore literature in which it has been compared to other practices (Gallacher, 1997; Rush & Shelden, 2011). This section examines practices that are like coaching, and those that are not.

Practices like coaching. Coaching is strongly informed by solution-focused brief counselling which emerged in the late 1970s and 80s (Berg, 1994; de Shazer, 1988; Grant & Cavanagh, 2014; Williams 2004). Its constructivist and future-focused nature meant it differed from traditional therapy approaches. The solution-focused counselling approach is based on the belief that the client already holds the capability and resources necessary to achieve a self-identified and preferred future solution state.

Coaching has also been likened to partnering, a frequently used term involving structured conversations (McWilliam, 2016). Built upon a trusting relationship, partnering requires adjustment of one's approach in order to be responsive to the partner at all times. This means culture, language, expectations, pace and tone need to be taken into account (Fialka, 2001; Keilty, 2017). Partnering has been researched and applied in child and maternal health in the United

Kingdom, Australia, and Aotearoa New Zealand through the Family Partnership model (FPM) of home visiting (Bidmead & Cowley, 2005a, 2005b; Davis & Day, 2007; Day, 2013; Hopwood, Fowler, Lee, Rossiter, & Bigsby, 2013; Keatinge, Fowler, & Briggs, 2007; Wilson & Huntington, 2009). The FPM views partnership as integral to a helping process whereby the professional and the family both have roles. It is based on the assumption all involved adults have individual characteristics, qualities and skill sets:

> "Practitioners need to relinquish the role of expert and adopt the role of partner, exercising restraint on giving advice and solutions, promoting a shared approach to expertise, and facilitating rather than directing parents towards achieving successful outcomes and change. It requires strength to openly examine and reflect on practice, manage the desire to guard and protect existing knowledge, constructs and skills, and to invest, trust in and learn from parents" (Day, 2013, p. 8)

Central to the FPM model is the development of the professional's understanding of and commitment to, a different way of working.

In addition to the above practices, McWilliam (2010) and Salisbury, Woods, and Copeland (2010) refer to collaborative consultation as a coaching-like practice employed in ECI settings. In name, consultative models represent an initial step towards less directive practices, involving communication with families and EC educators (Buysse & Wesley, 2004). In collaborative consultation, the ECI specialist makes some suggestions based on professional-knowledge, "but always in the spirit of brainstorming" with the parent or educator, and not before establishing what is happening in the situation for the child and family through a process of questioning (McWilliam, 2010, p. 173). Pighini, Goelman, Buchanan, Schonert-Reichl, and Brynelsen (2013) report active listening and becoming empowered as the parts of collaborative consultation that are valued most by parents.

McWilliam (2016) determined that the terms partnering, coaching and collaborative consultation may be referring to the same practices. The reason for using the term collaborative consultation instead of coaching in the literature is not clear, however, Salisbury et al. (2010) suggested that intentionally presenting it as a new practice might aid the adoption of the approach. Confusion around conflicting terminology (for example, to be collaborative and consultative at the same time) may be one of the reasons why the use of the term collaborative consultation is very limited in the literature.

Finally, though somewhat more structured in style, special interviewing techniques used in both health and education share some of the same features as coaching, and are, therefore considered alongside these comparable practices. For example, the practice of motivational interviewing "is about arranging conversations so that people talk themselves into change, based on their own values and interests" (Miller & Rollnick, 2012, p. 4). Alternatively, in ECI, McWilliam's routines-based interview involves the identification of available supporting resources, family aspirations, and pathways toward these goals. This coaching-related practice is utilised as part of a routines-based early intervention approach (McWilliam, 2010).

What coaching is not. Coaching has also been compared to and differentiated from a number of person-centred practices including counselling, consulting, mentoring, supervision, and direct teaching, training, or instructing (Bachkirova & Kauffman, 2009; Bachkirova et al., 2017; Gallacher, 1997; Rush & Shelden, 2011). The differences between the practices can be accounted for by considering the roles and responsibilities of the professional and client; who leads or directs the process e.g. determines goals; and who holds the power, knowledge, and skills to achieve these outcomes.

With the exception of solution-focused brief counselling as mentioned in section 2.2.4 page 17, there is a clear distinction made between coaching and talking therapies. As a non-therapeutic practice, coaching is not about the professional helping fix or to make the coachee better (Hunter & Blum, 2001; Williams, 2004). Instead, coaching is a practice guided by the coachee themselves.

Although coaching has been differentiated from mentoring, sources indicate an overlap may exist between the two practices (Megginsson & Clutterbuck, 2005; Thornton, 2015), specifically, that coaching may be incorporated within or alongside mentoring (Rowley, 2006; Rush & Shelden, 2011; Solansky, 2010). In ECE for example, the two terms have sometimes been "used interchangeably" to mean the same thing (Brouwer, Pierce, Treweek & Wallace, 2015, p. 94). However, distinctions are made by describing mentoring as a process usually carried out between a mentee and an older and wiser mentor. Furthermore, it is assumed that the mentor has significant knowledge about what the mentee is experiencing, because they were once in that position and have lived experience of what is being faced (Megginsson & Clutterbuck, 2005). The mentor transmits sage advice to the mentee, across a lengthy time period, most usually receiving no financial reward. This differs from coaching which is self-fulfilling and ends within a given time period usually because, in accordance with the purpose of coaching, the coachee has learned to self-coach and problem solve.

The distinction between direct teaching and coaching has also been discussed in the literature (Rush & Shelden, 2011). Whereas teaching involves a set curriculum, learning objectives, and instructor-led assessment of mastery, coaching is based on the coachee's self-assessment of current knowledge and position, self-identification of goals and possible actions, and facilitated reflection upon efforts towards outcomes. The coach plays a collaborative role in this process.

2.2.5 Critical aspects of coaching in ECI. Although there is debate about coaching definitions in ECI and beyond, a number of aspects critical to the practice have been identified. Outside of ECI, Bachkirova, Sibley, & Myers (2015) developed and applied a tool to micro-analyse imagined coaching sessions to see what coaches from different disciplines and philosophical approaches, understood the practice to be. They found coaches perceived coaching to be most characterised by the coach's use of questions to help the client "elaborate" and "to open new possibilities", for the sessions to not follow the coach's agenda, and for the process to not be carried out "mechanistically" (Bachkirova et al., 2015, p. 447).

Within ECI, two main studies have sought to empirically inform a practice-based definition of coaching by identifying critical features. These include Jayaraman, Marvin, Knoche and Bainter (2015) who developed a tool to look at behaviours of both coaches and coachees in the coaching process (see page 330-331 of their article for further detail), and Friedman, Woods, and Salisbury (2012) who worked towards an operational behavioural definition to describe coaching. What is interesting in the work of Friedman et al. (2012) is the use of non-coaching attributes in their evaluative tool. Apparently guided by literature that considered the coach's role to be directive and to demonstrate, as much as to facilitate and allow the coachee to lead the process, in-the-moment "observation, "direct teaching", and "demonstrating" were included in coaching category descriptions (Freidman et al., 2012, p. 73). Findings highlight the need to delineate teaching and support strategies from those of coaching.

Describing coaching by identifying its main aspects has been accepted as useful by other researchers, who have outlined five or six characteristics associated with its effective implementation. Examples are identified in the Table 2.1, and described below.

Table 2.1

Critical Aspects of Coaching

EC coaching – Rush & Shelden, 2011	SOOPR Caregiver Coaching Salisbury et al., 2017	Occupational Performance Coaching Graham, 2010	Colorado Consortium, 2009; Utah Office of Childcare, 2014
Joint planning	Setting the scene	Set goal	Setting the foundation
Observation	Observation & Opportunities to embed	Explore options	Co-creating the relationship
Action / Practice	Problem solving & Planning	Plan action	Communicating effectively
Reflection	Reflection & Review	Carry out plan	Facilitating learning and results
Feedback		Check performance	Assessing success of the coaching partnership
		Generalize	

Informed by a range of research, Rush and Shelden (2011) identify five important characteristics of coaching. These are “joint planning”, “observation”, “action” or “practice”, “reflection”, and “feedback” (Rush & Shelden, 2011, pp. 21-22), as outlined in Table 2.1. Joint planning involves the coach and parent or educator collaboratively developing a course of action for between sessions. Observation is used by either the coach or parent or educator coachee as needed, rather than at every coaching session. For example, the coachee observes the coach modelling an action. Action by the coachee occurs either “during or between” coaching sessions, allowing them to practise “new or existing skills” (Rush & Shelden, 2011, p. 21). Reflection offers a way for the current strategies or action to be evaluated and refined. It involves the coach questioning the coachee to determine what worked and to identify alternative strategies where required. Finally, feedback is offered from the coach to the coachee based on observed or reported actions, or to add to the coachee’s own ideas. The critical characteristics identified by Rush and Shelden have been utilised in other ECI coaching research as a way of investigating coaching utilisation

(Douglas, Meaden, & Kammes 2019; Meaden, Douglas, Kammes, & Schraml-Block, 2018; Ward et al., 2019).

Part of the Embedded Practices and Intervention with Caregivers (EPIC) model, Salisbury et al. (2017) outlines critical aspects in their caregiver coaching approach. See second column of Table 2.1. The SOOPR caregiver coaching approach has six distinct components. These are "setting the scene", "observation", "opportunities to embed", "problem solving", "reflection", and "review" (SOOPR) (Salisbury et al., 2017, p. 18).

Graham's Occupational Performance Coaching model (2010) used in a paediatric rehabilitation research setting consists of "emotional support", "information exchange", and "structured process" domains (p. 48). The structured process domain consists of six parts, which in similarity with Rush and Shelden's EC coaching includes planning, and execution of the plan. It also includes goal setting, exploration of options, checking performance, and generalisation.

And finally, the Colorado Consortium (2009) which utilises a competency-based approach for coaching in early childhood as informed by the International Coach Federation's Core Competencies (2008). The Colorado Consortium has also been revised and adopted by Utah Office of Childcare (2014) in their coaching competencies manual for EC professionals and care workers. Critical aspects of the Colorado Consortium (2009) approach include "setting the foundation", "co-creating the relationship", "communicating effectively", "facilitating learning and results", and "assessing success of the coaching partnership" (pp. 3-6) (see also Utah Office of Childcare, 2014, pp. 4-8). Setting the foundation acknowledges that the contract is entered into voluntarily by the coachee, that the coach must act in line with ethical and professional standards, and that the coachee understands their roles and responsibilities in the coaching partnership. Co-creating the relationship draws strongly on humanistic principles, concerning the establishment of a safe, caring, and predictable environment where respect and trust are

paramount. Communicating effectively involves both active listening and questioning, and requires the coach to be direct. Facilitating learning and results focuses on creating awareness, goal setting and planning, and "reinforcing the adult learner responsibility for action and progress" (Utah Office of Childcare, 2014, p. 7). Assessing success of the coaching partnership involves both the review of the coaching process and its outcomes. Each of the four models in Table 2.1 displays characteristics that align with definitions of coaching and several have been incorporated into ECI coaching practices in Aotearoa New Zealand.

More recently, Lorio, Romano, Woods, and Brown (2020) highlighted the importance of "problem solving and reflection" strategies in ECI coaching (p. 35). The authors reviewed 39 empirical caregiver coaching studies between 2011- 2018 to identify the prevalence and definition of problem solving and reflection. These strategies were chosen because of their importance in both adult learning and coaching. Thirteen studies included problem solving as an important aspect, although only eight offered further description of what this might look like. Problem solving was characterised as collaborative, occurring during the coaching session, and utilised questioning to elicit ideas and examples. Sixteen studies discussed reflection as a coaching strategy, which was used to support parent or educator self-analysis and review of the session or practice, with questioning again a predominant feature. Lorio et al. identified an overlap between the characteristics of problem solving and reflection in five studies in particular. Certainly, questioning appeared to be a shared component of both strategies.

There seems to be both similarities and differences in how different authors have described critical aspects of coaching in ECI. Colorado Consortium (2009) and the Utah Office of Childcare (2014) appear to be more principle-based, with attention paid to the ethical aspects of the coaching process, and the establishment of the coaching relationship. Rush & Shelden (2011) and Salisbury et al. (2017), however, focus on the execution of coaching itself, through cycles of

planning, action, reflection and review; while Graham (2010) included both relational support and structured coaching process components. The work of Lorio and colleagues (2020) suggested that coaching can also be characterised by the specific strategies that it entails, although identifying the most critical ones appears to be somewhat difficult. When such a range of interpretations of coaching components exists, it is no wonder that ECI professionals who are learning to implement the practice might be unsure of what it entails.

2.2.6 Empirical data in understandings of coaching. Few studies have examined participants' understandings of coaching in ECI literature. Although some research examines perspectives on coaching, most studies do not look at participants' own definitions of coaching to show their understanding of the practice. One study which did examine this question was undertaken by Schachter, Jackson, Knoche, and Hatton-Bowers (2019) in which, as part of a survey study, participants were asked to describe coaching in their own words. They found participants frequently described coaching by four key characteristics: support 38.6%, guidance 14.9%, relationship 22.8%, and it being a structured process 10.9%, comprising feedback loops, reflection, modelling, and planning. The overall scarcity of research in professional understandings of coaching suggests further research is needed in this area.

2.2.7 The impact of coaching. Given its existence in the literature over three decades, there is a comparatively small body of literature focused on the impact of coaching. The impact can be examined from a transactional perspective in terms of attainment of behavioural targets, or at a transformational level in relation to emotional, attitudinal and motivational shifts (Sherbourne, 2016; Sofianos, 2015). At the very least, coaching does not appear to be harmful, with initial data suggesting at minimum its effectiveness is equal to or greater than other practices, whilst also contributing to the effect of these (Kemp & Turnbull, 2014).

Impacts on family factors. In general, coaching with families has been used to facilitate connection between parent and child (Barnett, Niec, & Acevedo-Polakovich, 2014; McCollum, 1991), for health promotion or healthy family functioning (Akin, 2016; Allen & Huff, 2014; Bamford, Mackew, & Golawski, 2012; Rotheram-Borus, Swendeman, Rotheram-Fuller, & Youssef, 2018), to work with characteristics or conditions such as autistic spectrum disorder or attention deficit and/or hyperactivity disorder (Ashburner, Vickerstaff, Beetge, & Copley, 2016; Barkaia, Stokes, & Mikiashvili, 2017; Hughes, 2017), or specific developmental areas such as motor, communication, or social emotional (Brown & Woods, 2015; 2016; Windsor, Woods, Kaiser, Snyder, & Salisbury 2019). Coaching also supports parenting education (Barton & Cohen Lissman, 2015; Ferrari, Sgaramella, & di Maggio, 2018). However, because it may be implemented independently or incorporated within or alongside other interventions (Kemp & Turnbull, 2014; Peacock-Chambers, Ivy, & Bair-Merritt, 2017), the coaching applied in these types of studies is unlikely to be uniform, therefore attribution and comparison of positive findings should be issued with care.

Nevertheless, studies have shown coaching can increase identified behaviours. Ciupe and Salisbury (2020) found that SOOPR caregiver coaching during home-visits led to an increase in the initiation of teaching behaviours, responsiveness and encouragement by three parents of preschool children with disabilities. The teaching behaviours of parents that were increased in response to coaching included environmental arrangement, contingent responding, wait-time, and prompts. Siller, Hotez, Swanson, Delavenne, and Sigman (2018) found that a focused family-centred coaching intervention enhanced the capacity of parents of children with autistic spectrum disorder to reflect and self-evaluate, as they learned more responsive parenting behaviours. A local study focused on the facilitation of social communication for pre-schoolers with autistic spectrum disorder had similar findings. Pretorius (2018) found that a training plus combined coaching intervention (which included demonstration, videoing, and feedback) resulted in

parents gaining skills in supporting social communication, whilst also becoming more confident and empowered.

Professional impacts. Drawing from a multidisciplinary paediatric rather than a solely ECI context, coaching has been found to have an impact on the professional role. Utilising a qualitative descriptive approach, Schwellness, Seko, King, Baldwin, and Servais (2019) found the changing professional role - from being less of an expert to more of a listener - to be one of three main areas of impact of solution-focused coaching with families of paediatric patients receiving occupational and physical therapy services. This finding was shared by Graham, Boland, Ziviani, and Rodger (2018) who investigated occupational and physiotherapists' experiences of occupational performance coaching in clinical practice. They found professionals reported listening more readily, sharing power in the coaching dyad by taking on more of a facilitative role, and empowering the family member through the coaching process. Participants also reported focusing more on the development of meaningful goals and feeling liberated from the need to lead and have all the answers in the ECI process as family members' ability to problem solve increased.

Organisational impacts. At an organisational level, involvement in professional learning programmes that utilise coaching has a ripple or flow-on effect (Dunst, 2015; Guskey, 2014; O'Connor & Cavanagh, 2013). Having experienced the coaching model firsthand, the ECI professional is in a better position to coach parents, caregivers and educators, which has the potential for positive impact on the child. Coaching also "provides an opportunity for professionals to obtain support and encourages the belief that practitioners help and care about each other" (Gallacher, 1997, p. 203). Permeation of coaching practices across the workplace can result in improved communication, collaborative relationships, and an enhanced workplace atmosphere overall. Coaching can also allow the organisations to be more flexible and responsive

to family's actual situations, and for services to be delivered more efficiently, in terms of requested duration and frequency of contact (Graham et al., 2018).

Programmatic Impact. Coaching to support programmatic implementation focuses on supporting the collective or professional's ability to implement specific strategies, models, practices, programmes or organisational values in order to achieve positive outcomes, cognisant of accountability, cost-effectiveness, and quality (Bishop, Snyder, & Crow, 2015; Fettig & Artman-Meeker, 2016; Fettig et al., 2016; Fettig, Schultz, & Sreckovic, 2015; Halle, Metz, & Martinez-Beck, 2013; Hemmeter, Snyder, Fox, & Algina, 2016; Powell & Diamond, 2013; Reinke, Stormont, Herman, & Newcomer, 2014; Snyder, Hemmeter, & Fox, 2015). Literature in programmatic coaching to support implementation is only indirectly linked to the goal of inclusion and participation of all children and families in natural learning environments. The use of coaching to support the implementation of coaching at a programmatic level, is of some relevance to the current study however, but this is an area which is poorly researched empirically.

Impact of coaching on inclusion and participation. A few studies have shown the impact of coaching on community inclusion and participation for children with disabilities and their families. Bering (2019) found coaching to promote inclusion in the ECE environment. Specifically, the delivery of conjoint behavioural coaching between ECI and EC teachers in 27 centres reduced the rate of expulsions of children with disabilities from EC centres. In examining the impacts of coaching on parents of both pre-schoolers and older children, King, Schwellnus, Servais, and Baldwin (2019) found a solution-focused coaching process improved client engagement; empowered parents through increased "confidence", "self-efficacy" and "self-determination" (p. 23); and enhanced capacity through changes in parenting; all of which led to increases in community participation. In particular, increased ability to parent in community

settings, and being believed in and supported, were factors which were reported to influence participation.

Although issues with defining coaching and conjoining it with other practices means research in the field is difficult to compare, empirical studies have found that its various forms have positive impact on children, family members, professionals, and organisations. In particular, evidence suggests coaching influences children's behavioural and developmental outcomes and the likelihood of being included and participating in natural learning environments; improves parents' confidence, self-efficacy, self-determination, and ability to be reflective; and increases professionals' capacity to listen, facilitate, and focus on meaningful planning goals. In view of this evidence one might suppose that coaching has been widely implemented in the field. Therefore, the following section, aims to examine implementation of coaching in ECI.

2.3 Implementation of Coaching in ECI

To implement, means to "complete", "perform" or "carry out" ('implement', Oxford English Dictionary, 2020). Implementing a practice is about applying its theoretical concepts and practical strategies in real life settings. Although extensive literature examining wide-scale programmatic implementation from a scientific perspective now exists in the early years (Halle et al., 2013), this section looks more narrowly at evidence investigating the way ECI professionals carry out coaching in practice. Therefore in this case, implementation fits more closely with the idea of praxis, which pertains to the individual and their practical use of theory or technique that has been learned ('praxis', Cambridge Dictionary online, 2020), and the dialogically-informed process by which this takes place (Arif, 2009; M. Smith, 2011). However, as ECI coaching research utilises the term implementation, it has also been chosen for use in the current study.

2.3.1 Research in the implementation of coaching. There is a growing body of literature in coaching across disciplines, however, evidence in implementation has had limited attention. Outside of ECI, there has been a call for more studies to show how participants learn about and apply coaching (Grant, 2010). Similarly, although coaching is shown to be valued in ECI (Douglas et al., 2019), there is limited published research about its implementation (Branson, 2015; Romano & Schnurr, 2020).

Location of implementation. It is difficult to determine how widespread ECI coaching is globally. Evidence suggests coaching of families and educators has been undertaken for an extended period in some States of America. For example, early childhood coaching protocols can be located for Utah and Colorado (Colorado Consortium, 2009; Utah Office of Childcare, 2014), and Nebraska has had reporting mechanisms in place for the past decade (Jayaraman, Knoche, Marvin, & Bainter, 2014; Schachter et al., 2019). Research also indicates coaching has been carried out in Illinois and Florida (Salisbury et al., 2010, 2017), and other undisclosed mid-western (Meaden et al., 2018) and south-western states (Stewart & Applequist, 2019). Therefore, although coaching is occurring, it appears to be sporadic. Locally, just one study addresses implementation of coaching for inclusion and participation in Aotearoa New Zealand (Graham et al., 2018). It is difficult to determine whether the limited availability of global studies means there has been poor uptake by professionals in the field or simply that occurrences in real-life settings are largely undocumented. Certainly, Schachter et al. (2019) found that up to 75 per cent of administrators collecting data regarding coaching efficacy measured outcomes informally i.e. through discussion, rather than through more formal tangible means.

Examples of implementation research. In a survey study of 58 ECI professionals in a mid-west state of America, Meaden et al. (2018) investigated implementation of coaching according to critical characteristics of Shelden and Rush's EC coaching model. Shelden and

Rush's five categories were reduced to three by joining together those most interlinked – i.e. "joint planning", "observation and action", and "reflection and feedback" (Meaden et al., 2018, p. 208), and participants were encouraged to describe their use. Participants reported a number of key coaching behaviours in relation to each category, although being positive and non-judgemental were mentioned throughout the data. It was found joint planning was used to plan at the beginning of a session, or at the end of a session to determine between-session actions or focus of future sessions. Planning of goals and long term priorities as chosen by the caregiver, were also discussed. The observation and action category was reported to be carried out most frequently through the use of modelling for caregivers to observe. Professionals were not always present to observe naturally occurring routines, but this was perceived to be unimportant. Instead problem-solving and coaching conversations were utilised to help the family determine their course of action or strategies between coaching sessions. Reflection and feedback were reported to require more time and rehearsal. Participants utilised questioning and paraphrasing, and sometimes video feedback to stimulate reflection, and reported sharing both evaluative and informative feedback with coachees utilising a range of modes e.g. email. As well as study data seeming to demonstrate implementation of coaching, participants also reported benefits of the practice. Perceived benefits included increased opportunities to practice in daily routines, professional recognition of families as experts, enhanced parent-professional relationships, the promotion of family capacity, and parental empowerment.

Other studies have enabled implementation of coaching to be examined at a micro level. In particular, video studies involving the observation and coding of coaching behaviours have allowed the implementation process to be mapped. These studies report mixed results. Examining the implementation of coaching by 6 ECI professionals, Salisbury, Cambray-Engstrom, and Woods (2012) found that participants put a range of learned coaching strategies in place, but that these were underreported when case notes were compared to actual occurrence

in videotaped evidence. It was suggested this discrepancy could be due to participants' beliefs about their fidelity to the strategy, or, their choice not to attribute behaviours to a specific category – highlighting coding protocols as more valuable in research than professional practice settings. Investigating videotaped coaching conversations of 24 coaching dyads, Jayaraman et al. (2015) found acknowledging and clarifying to be the most frequently used coaching behaviours; asking questions, introducing new topics, joint planning and sharing inferential observations to be moderately applied; and, making conversational connections, establishing and maintaining the relationship, using feedback, and making specific observations the least frequent observed of the coaching behaviours. A number of these behaviours, such as questioning, feedback, and inferential observations, had been a focus of professional learning of participants, but this did not translate into frequent use in the research setting.

Qualitative methods have also been used to explore implementation of coaching in ECI settings. Using an exploratory case study design, Salisbury et al. (2010) investigated the implementation of collaborative consultation by 6 ECI professionals, as part of the Chicago Early Intervention Project model. In addition to the administration of the Stages of Concern Questionnaire for measuring "perceptions about an innovation" (p. 137), qualitative data were gathered from the questionnaire interviews, focus groups, and other meetings with providers. Though pertaining to the adoption and utilisation of the wider model rather than coaching specifically, three key themes relating to the perceptions and experiences of participants were found from analysis. These were related to supports for learning, executing the approach, and the impact of the urban environment (Salisbury et al., 2010). Similarly, Salisbury et al. (2017) utilised a mixed descriptive phenomenological and case-study design to investigate the perspectives of both caregivers and ECI professionals, in the implementation of both coaching and the five-question framework, as part of the EPIC approach. Further detail about findings from these studies is included in section 2.3.2 *Influences on the implementation of coaching* section below.

Issues with implementation research. Romano and Schnurr (2020) commented about the difference between research-situated coaching and real world implementation, and highlighted the importance of including community-trained professionals in research which documents how ECI professionals learn to coach, as well as the need for experimental studies in professional learning in coaching. The call for better professional learning, and research studies to document this and the application of coaching, indicates a dearth of data in implementation overall.

2.3.2 Influences on the implementation of coaching. A number of factors influence the implementation of coaching. These factors include those that have been identified to support successful implementation of coaching, and the main barriers or challenges that hinder it. These two areas will be discussed in more detail below.

Factors contributing to successful implementation. Factors found to contribute to successful implementation include different types of support, and the presence of protocols. Focused on a paediatric rehabilitation rather than a preschool sample, Tatla et al. (2017) found that organisational support contributed to successful coaching implementation. This support included the availability of funding, time and scheduling for professional development, and assistance from managers and leaders. Salisbury et al. (2010) found support for learning about coaching and its implementation to extend beyond those provided by organisational supports. Time for reflection, the presence of a collaborative learning community, structured training and ongoing development, and opportunities to gather practical experience were also found to be contributory. In terms of supports during actual coaching, Salisbury et al. (2017) found that when working with the coachee, ECI professionals were guided by a protocol which reminded them of the coaching framework. This was valued by the ECI professionals as a way of providing focus and structure for the coaching process.

Key challenges in the implementation of coaching. Generally speaking, application of coaching is seen as "much more difficult" than it appears in theory (Stewart & Applequist, 2019, p. 249). This is evidenced by the identification of challenges in implementation literature. In empirical studies, these challenges relate to changed ECI roles, time, and coachee and environmental factors.

Studies suggest the change in professional and family roles necessitated by coaching can impede its implementation (Douglas et al., 2019; Graham et al., 2018; Meaden et al., 2018; Salisbury et al., 2010). These changing roles require both families and professionals to adapt. Whereas the professional was once seen as the expert leading the process, in coaching, the parent is required to play more of a front role. Lack of understanding around this new role is reported to be an issue, but is especially apparent where cultural background means families expect professionals to 'fix' deficits (Meaden et al., 2018; Stewart & Applequist, 2019). For professionals, difficulties may be faced where extra effort is needed to build relationships, to listen with the required intensity, and to focus on questioning and reflection (Graham et al., 2018). ECI professionals trained in allied health are thought to be more affected by the change in role, due to the incongruence between original training and coaching philosophy.

Time has also been reported as a challenge to the implementation of coaching. Knoche, Kuhn, and Eum (2013) identified a number of coaching challenges that impinge on time, in their study of parents, preschool teachers, and childcare providers who had experienced coaching. These challenges included the frequency with which the coach was able to meet, scheduling at a time that suited both coach and coachee, finding time in busy routines for coaching conversations, length of the coaching session, and coach workload.

A number of studies have identified coachee factors that challenge the implementation of coaching. For families, these include parental well-being and life stressors (Douglas et al., 2019;

Meaden et al., 2018); family skills and background (Meaden et al., 2018), cultural factors such as language differences (Douglas et al., 2019; Salisbury et al., 2010, 2017) and communication style (Stewart & Applequist, 2019). Problem solving and identification of routines within which to embed coaching strategies are seen as particularly problematic when families and professionals do not share culturally and linguistic backgrounds. Difficulties with implementation of coaching and other participatory practices have also been attributed to the family's level of openness, motivation, and commitment (Fleming, Brook Sawyer, & Campbell, 2011; Meaden et al., 2018). Similarly, willingness for educator and parent coachees to be open in the coaching process was found by Knoche et al. (2013) to be a challenging factor, with a coach's presence in the classroom or home sometimes resulting in discomfort.

Knoche et al. (2013) also identified the difficulties faced by coachees in applying strategies between sessions, when the professional was no longer present. This may suggest that the coaching process was not fully understood by the study participants. In coaching, it is acceptable for the coachee to be self-motivated and to carry out planned actions between sessions. Where these actions are not executed, the next coaching session can focus on determining reasons why they hadn't occurred, and problem solving new ways forward. However, it may have been possible that a more instructional coaching approach was used in this case, where reliance on the coach demonstrating or teaching the coachee may have resulted in a lack of confidence between sessions.

Environmental issues have also been found to impede implementation of coaching in real-life settings. Salisbury et al. (2010) reported numerous constraints to the delivery of a coaching programme in an urban neighbourhood with "high-poverty, high-crime", notwithstanding professional safety (p. 144). Several studies also suggest the ability to coach is affected by the number of siblings or people living in the residence which can be disruptive and take attention

away from the process, or that ECI professionals might work with someone other than the parent (Salisbury et al., 2010, 2017; Stewart & Applequist, 2019). Physical set up of the dwelling space has also been reported as an issue (Salisbury et al., 2010).

Although professional learning does not necessarily equate to the implementation of coaching behaviours, the strong link between the two was noted by Freidman et al. (2012). They found that types and duration of different coaching training combined with level of work experience and disciplinary preparation, resulted in variation in the way participants applied coaching behaviours. However, these observations were reported descriptively and not evaluated either statistically or by other qualitative methods. In non-empirical commentaries and reviews, the adequacy of pre and in-service professional learning has been noted as a barrier to coaching implementation (Akhbari Ziegler & Hadders-Algra, 2020; Branson, 2015; Romano & Schnurr, 2020). In a commentary on family coaching for example, Branson (2015) suggested insufficient personnel preparation and ongoing professional learning opportunities presents a key challenge. This includes organisational support for ongoing coaching or supervision.

Two key issues are noted regarding professional learning for coaching. Firstly, difficulties may be faced in the acquisition of new knowledge, skills, and beliefs in professional learning, with knowledge in both coaching and other key areas required. Akhbari Ziegler and Hadders-Algra, (2020) for example, note the importance of adult learning knowledge. Romano and Schnurr (2020) state that implementation of coaching is difficult because ECI professionals require a wide-ranging skill set including knowledge in child development and embedded intervention, and adult coaching skills. This is supported by empirical data which similarly suggests the challenge of understanding new coaching constructs and processes can be an issue (Salisbury et al., 2012).

Secondly, researchers suggest that strategies need to be learned and practised in professional learning then real-life settings (Akhbari Ziegler & Hadders-Algra, 2020), a process through which learning continues (Tatla et al., 2017). Where opportunities for translation into practice are not offered, the ECI professional is unlikely to feel confident in executing the coaching process with families and educators. Akhbari Ziegler and Hadders-Algra (2020) asserts that this translation of theory to practice needs to occur with some consistency but become nuanced to meet the needs of the family. This involves knowing when to use coaching and how to do so (Tatla et al., 2017). The need for professional learning that leads to fidelity between the coaching model that is introduced and the one that is implemented has been noted (Kemp & Turnbull, 2014). However, this adherence is somewhat at odds with the coaching paradigm which veers away from a one-size-fits-all approach, instead utilising a do-what-works approach (Rush & Shelden, 2011).

Existent research offers valuable insights into areas that encourage and prevent successful implementation of coaching. The practical implications of these data means that these areas can be addressed to improve implementation in the field. Evidence highlights the important role of professional learning in the implementation of coaching with families and educators. It seems that appropriate professional learning and supports are one way to assure more effective implementation. A review of professional learning and coaching materials will be covered in the next section.

2.4 Professional Learning in Coaching

For ECI professionals to coach competently and confidently with parents and educators, opportunities for appropriate professional learning must be available to ensure coaching knowledge and practical skill level are well developed (Friedman et al., 2012; Stewart & Applequist, 2019). This section provides a general overview of professional learning and

rationales for its use, as well as description of what effective learning may involve. It then outlines professional learning in ECI in relation to the Aotearoa New Zealand context, before overviewing and critiquing literature in professional learning in coaching in ECI.

2.4.1 Definition and purpose of professional learning. Professional learning encompasses the activities that result in an adult learner explicitly or implicitly learning for the enhancement of their professional role (Evans, 2019). It leads to improved professional knowledge and skills, and critical thinking, and a better awareness of current practices (The General Teaching Council for Scotland, 2020). Professional learning is most frequently focused on achieving implementation of a specific practice or innovation (Campbell & Sawyer, 2009). From an organisational perspective, professional learning enhances the value of the organisation through its employees, thus supporting overall growth (Segers, Messman, & Dochy, 2018). Webster-Wright (2009) explains that:

> "professionals learn, in a way that shapes their practice, from a diverse range of activities, from formal PD programs, through interaction with work colleagues, to experiences outside work, in differing combinations and permutations of experiences." (Webster-Wright, 2009, p. 705)

Thus, professional learning can be viewed as both an individual and a collective activity which may occur through formal, informal and incidental mechanisms (Cherrington & Thornton, 2013; Evans, 2019; Marsick, Watkins, Callahan, & Volpe, 2009; Segers, Messman, & Dochy, 2018; Webster-Wright, 2009).

Professional learning is usually undertaken for two main reasons; firstly, because it has been stipulated in ethical or practice certification guidelines or in an employment contract (Guskey, 2002; King, 2019); and secondly, because it fits with an inbuilt moral code, where personal

engagement in learning is known to improve professional practice and outcomes for clients (King, 2019).

2.4.2 Effective professional learning. There is some agreement in the literature about what effective professional learning looks like. Firstly, it is suggested a new ECI practice should be introduced both theoretically with the sharing of specific information and practically, through demonstration (Dunst, 2015; Guskey, 2014). Desimone (2011) suggests this includes making clear how a new practice is aligned with policies and standards.

Secondly, opportunity to embed the practice in normal workplace activities and self-evaluate performance should be offered (Archibald, Coggshall, Croft, & Goe; 2011; Dunst, 2015; Guskey, 2002). Informed by the work of learning theorists, Dewey, Kolb, and Knowles, the notion of experiential learning has long been part of professional learning in education and health, where it allows professionals to "construct knowledge…through real life experiences" (Yardley, Teunissen, & Dornan, 2012, p. 161), resulting in a clearer understanding of the practices and activities that occur in the professional context.

Thirdly, because reflective processes result in learning more readily than practical application on its own (Schön, 1987; 1991), individual and collective self-reflection through journaling, conversations with peers, team discussion, and self-assessment against standards is encouraged (Dunst, 2015). Reflection involves "in-depth consideration of events or situations outside of oneself" (Bolton, 2010 p. 13), and can be described as a process of re-playing and practically problem solving e.g. "what happened, why, what did I think and feel about it, how can I do it better next time?" (Bolton, 2010, p. 14). Alongside practical experience, Dewey (1938) and Kolb (1984) in particular, consider reflection a necessary aspect of learning. Practices such as coaching and mentoring, or supervision, through face-to-face, phone or online means, have been identified as being able to support professionals to become more reflective about new practices and in their

ECI roles (Dunst, 2015; Sukkar et al., 2016). Therefore, in addition to the provision of multiple learning opportunities, ongoing supports across time by a range of people including peers, coaches, and supervisors is considered helpful for reinforcing learning (Dunst, 2015; Halle, Metz, & Martinez-Beck, 2013).

Both experiential learning and reflective processes have been identified as effective professional development practices for enhancing pedagogy in ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand to challenge "deficit assumptions" and support "inclusive practice" (Mitchell & Cubey, 2003, p. viii). Specifically, Mitchell and Cubey (2003) found effective professional development and learning:

1) incorporates the participants' own aspirations, skills, and knowledge and understanding into the learning context
2) provides theoretical and content knowledge and information about alternative practices to those used currently
3) involves participants in investigating pedagogy within their own workplace setting
4) encourages participants to analyse these settings, and uncover discrepant data to invoke new understanding
5) uses critical reflection, enabling participants to investigate and challenge assumptions and extend their thinking
6) supports educational practice that is inclusive of diverse children, families and whānau
7) helps participants to change educational practice, through shifting beliefs, understanding, and/or attitudes
8) helps participants to gain awareness of their own thinking, actions, and influence

(adapted from Mitchell & Cubey, 2003, p. xi)

Other factors also influence the effectiveness of professional learning. These include the ECI professional's readiness for learning (Chu & Tsai, 2009; Hetzner, Heid, & Gruber, 2012; Lai, 2011; Premkumar et al., 2018; Slater, Cusick, & Louie, 2017)), the support structures in place at

legislative, policy and practice levels (Stewart & Applequist, 2019; Tomlin, Hines, & Sturm, 2016); the space and time available for professionals to engage in the professional learning process (Killion, 2013), and the interest in learning and propensity for collaboration of the group undertaking professional learning (London & Sessa, 2007).

2.4.3 Professional learning in ECI in Aotearoa New Zealand. Existent legislation, policies, and curriculum, and implicit discourses guide a teacher's practice and professional learning (Cherrington & Thornton, 2013; Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007). In Aotearoa New Zealand, the national EC curriculum and ethical codes guide professional learning of ECI professionals working in inclusive ECE. Specifically, the socio-culturally underpinned EC curriculum - *Te Whāriki* expects educators to be "committed to ongoing professional development that has positive impact on children's learning" (MoE, 2017; p. 59). In addition, ethical codes assert that the professional should take responsibility for their own ongoing professional learning, for example, clauses 4B & 4E in the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand Code of Ethics for Registered Teachers (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2020) and 3:1 & 3:2 in the Early Intervention Association of Aotearoa New Zealand (EIAANZ) Code of Ethics (EIAANZ, 2019).

***Formal Professional Learning*.** Two main types of formal professional learning are documented in the Aotearoa New Zealand context. These are pre-service training courses, and organised professional learning events such as courses and workshops.

Professional training. Professionals working in ECI in Aotearoa New Zealand hold relevant qualifications obtained in specialised training courses. For those in allied health or social support roles, ECI training is discipline specific. For example a speech language therapist who works in an ECI role will have a speech language therapy or pathology university qualification, with some specialist knowledge and experience working with infants and young children under

the age of six, and their families. However, supplementary and related ECI training is also available in courses such as the level 7 'Rehabilitation with Children' paper through the University of Otago (University of Otago, 2020).

The main way for EC teachers to obtain a formal ECI teaching qualification is to pursue a recognised course of postgraduate study. The Early Intervention diploma programme began in 1989 at the Auckland College of Education (Corby, Kennewell, Davies, Penehira, & Rose, 2004). This training involved block courses, individual study, and some shared face-to-face interactions in regional groups (personal communication, 2014, 2015). From 2011 - 2020, the University of Canterbury through the Postgraduate Diploma in Specialist Teaching (PGDip SpTch), has provided early intervention teacher training, a qualification collaboratively taught with Massey University. The PGDip SpTch is a professional qualification for resource teachers in inclusive education across seven key areas: autism spectrum disorder, blind and low vision, complex educational needs, deaf and hard of hearing, early intervention, gifted and talented, and learning and behaviour diversity. This qualification uses a blended learning approach, which includes face-to-face block courses and regional groups, and online methods – specifically a Moodle online environment (http://masseyuniversity.mrooms.net/), e-portfolios, Adobe connect, Skype and email. To apply to enrol in the programme, teachers need to be fully registered and have at least two years' teaching experience (University of Canterbury, 2020).

Organised professional learning events. Limited data in engagement in organised professional development in the Aotearoa New Zealand context exists. Based on a review of studies from Aotearoa New Zealand and overseas looking at teacher professional development and learning in the compulsory sector, Timperley et al. suggest it is "generally accepted that listening to inspiring speakers or attending one-off workshops rarely changes teacher practice sufficiently to impact on student outcomes" (2007, p. xxv), and that more is required in the long

term for changes to occur as a result of professional learning. In concurrence, overseas ECI literature also suggests that professional learning events alone are insufficient for practices to be embedded in everyday professional work, and that further ongoing supports are required for this to occur (Sukkar et al., 2016).

Informal professional learning. Most professional learning takes place informally or incidentally in the workplace without the specific intent of it being a learning experience (Evans, 2019; Timperley et al., 2007). This means much of informal professional learning that occurs is undocumented. Blackburn (2016) reported one example of informal learning in an ECI workplace in Aotearoa New Zealand. Based on observation in an independent service provision context, Blackburn (2016) found a "culture of learning" occurred through ongoing communication between interdisciplinary ECI team members which allowed professionals to learn "with and from each other" to enhance their individual learning (p. 341).

2.4.4 Professional learning in coaching in ECI. Professional learning in coaching is discussed in the ECI literature in two ways. Firstly, coaching preparation is described and evaluated in field-based contexts; and secondly, where measurement of coaching implementation is being carried out in a research setting, professional learning inputs are recorded in conjunction with data in the application of coaching behaviours. Although some description of professional learning is limited to detail about duration and an overview of learning activities (for example, Knoche et al., 2013), in other studies organised programmes of professional learning are more comprehensively outlined (Jayaraman et al., 2015; Salisbury et al., 2012, 2017). Overall however, sources suggest documentation of professional learning in coaching in ECI is somewhat limited and has been inadequately reported overall (Barton & Cohen Lissman, 2015; Douglas et al., 2019; Ward et al., 2019). This is evidenced in a systemic review of 18 studies in parent

coaching in ECI, where only three projects reported coaching specific training (Ward et al., 2019).

Background qualifications. Research studies from America have reported ECI professionals who are adopting coaching hold appropriate ECI or allied health qualifications (e.g. Salisbury et al., 2012, 2017). Douglas et al. (2019) found that relevant personal life or work experiences in combination with disciplinary training enhances the professional's ability to work with families and others professionals.

In-service professional learning. Professional learning in ECI usually takes place during pre-service training, or in-service while working in the field. However, literature suggests that in general, coaching is not a focus of pre-service training. In a mixed methods study, Douglas et al. (2019) asked 19 participants about professional learning in coaching in pre-service and in-service settings. Three-quarters of participants felt overall coaching preparation was inadequate, with an indication that pre-service coaching content was extremely limited, although this lack of focus may have been due to the length of time since initial qualifications had been gained. In-service coaching training was also reported to be restricted, though both formal and informal and self-directed learning opportunities were described (Douglas et al., 2019). Although few conclusions can be drawn from a single study, even where coaching is part of ECI training, opportunities for practise and ongoing organisational support are also required for the practice to be integrated and maintained in everyday work with families and educators (Rush et al., 2003).

Professional learning in field-based settings. Both Jayaraman et al. (2014) and (2015) outlined a governmental-driven professional learning programme in Nebraska. Sponsored by the state government education department, EC coach training was undertaken in 2009-2010 by 65 participants who provided ECI services for families and preschools, focusing on family and individual service plans, quality of the classroom environment, and the domain of social-

emotional development. Participants were trained as EC teachers or in other ECI professions. The coaching training session involved twenty-four hours of lectures and group discussions, and engagement in case study exercises, across three days. Professional learning topics pertained to the coaching role, coaching components, including "observation, joint planning, reflection…feedback" and questioning (Jayaraman, et al 2015, p. 327). Participants were expected to be familiar with a coaching plan by the end of the training. Follow-up interviews and activities that enhanced understanding and implementation also took place.

The above studies were carried out as part of reporting focused on coaching fidelity and implementation. Knoche et al. (2013) also referred to the same professional learning programme, and Schachter et al. (2019) sought to capture data in its subsequent iterations (see below).

In particular, Schachter et al. (2019) followed up the Nebraska Early Childhood Coach Collaboration programme by carrying out a survey to look at coaching and coaching preparation across the state. One hundred and one ECI coaches were surveyed online. Of these participants almost 77% had attended that Nebraska state EC coach training. Approximately 70% had had content specific training (for example literacy if a literacy initiative), and 62% had had additional coaching specific training. In addition, one-quarter of all participants reported being coached as an ongoing professional learning mechanism, and 55% said they had experienced informal preparation for coaching through meetings. Forty three percent had also undertaken *other* coaching training, although this was not further described. Therefore both external and in-house, and formal and informal professional learning activities were reported, though the methods for doing so did not appear to allow in-depth data to be collected.

Some studies have missed valuable opportunities to examine professional learning in coaching. For example, Meaden et al. (2018) carried out a survey study (discussed on page 30) to look at the beliefs and coaching practices of ECI professionals whilst working in homes, ECE and

community settings. However, in doing so, although base qualifications were reported, there was no inquiry into how participants learned about coaching. Furthermore, participants were ruled out if they were not utilising coaching in their current practice. Therefore, information about whether any ECI professionals had been trained in the practice but subsequently not used it, was not captured, nor were any links between professional learning and coaching in practice evident.

Duration and frequency of professional learning. Duration of professional learning is variously documented, with some multi-component professional learning programmes reported to be carried out across 24 months (for example, Salisbury et al., 2012). Other studies describe the duration of professional learning as the length of the initial first training course (two to three days), with follow-up support in the form of supervision, coaching or mentoring or collective meetings held either weekly or monthly (Friedman et al., 2012; Salisbury & Copeland, 2013) and reported separately. In an Aotearoa New Zealand context, Graham et al. (2018) detailed a two-day coaching training workshop as a professional learning event delivered by a qualified occupational therapist. The professional learning event was well explained, but little background was provided about any informal learning that may have occurred through trialling the practice in everyday work. However, follow-up reflective supervision and mentor coaching were reported.

Professional learning content. Professional learning programmes include both theoretical and practical components. These concentrate on underlying principles of coaching, and coaching strategies and application (Friedman et al., 2012; Graham et al., 2018; Salisbury et al., 2017). Coaching theory is often learned in conjunction with knowledge in family-centred practices and embedded interventions, particularly in the EPIC model (Ciupe & Salisbury, 2020; Salisbury et al., 2012); or combined with further content specific information e.g.,

communication (Brown & Woods, 2012). Informal learning might occur through discussion but on the whole is less rigorously documented.

How professional learning occurs. A range of professional learning methods are reported in ECI coaching literature. These include instructional or "didactic" teaching in the form of lectures or teacher-driven sessions; small group discussions, and dynamic problem solving in case-based scenario or role play sessions (Graham et al., 2018, p. 1387; Salisbury et al., 2012). Follow-up in the form of coaching, mentoring or supervision has been both reported and recommended (Friedman et al., 2012; Grant, 2010; Salisbury & Copeland, 2013; Salisbury et al., 2012). For the most part, professional learning seems to take place in groups, with few examples of individual learning reported.

Professional resources need to be made available to support the development of a new practice (Tomlin, Hines, & Sturm, 2016). As well as online technologies, resources mentioned in relation to professional learning in coaching include manuals, guides, fidelity checklists, or, self-made resources which were not further explained (Douglas et al., 2019; Salisbury et al., 2012, 2017; Vismara et al., 2012). With the exception of Salisbury et al. (2017), limited use of video in professional learning has been reported. Salisbury et al. (2017) utilised video to teach coaching principles and practices, to facilitate the identification of these, and to support review and reflection processes.

Professional learning in coaching also takes place online (Brown & Woods, 2012; Ciupe & Salisbury, 2020). However, although this format allows coaching content to be accessed, and assessed, it fails to allow emergent coaching to be observed in practice. For example, Ciupe and Salisbury (2020) reported SOOPR coaching training of a qualified ECI professional who was the coach participant in the study along with three parent-child coaching dyads. Professional learning in coaching was undertaken online by the ECI professional, alongside modules in embedded

intervention processes which were part of EPIC project training. Both coaching and embedded intervention modules were between eight and ten hours in length, and a test at completion required an 80 percent pass rate. Observation and coding assessment then took place with a score of eighty percent reliability on a fidelity measure required for both SOOPR coaching and embedded intervention practices, before the ECI professional was to work with the three families. However, despite this testing process it was unclear whether the professional's own practical coaching abilities were observed or assessed.

Progression of professional learning in coaching. Because of the limited research in the area of professional learning in coaching in ECI, available data from coaching literature from other sectors and disciplines can offer valuable information about the process of learning to coach. Those beginning to coach are more likely to be concerned with coaching content – i.e. a particular model or the rules by which to perform 'good' coaching (Leat, Lofthouse, & Towler, 2012). Models provide structure and can encourage client directedness in emergent coaching, but there are some dangers when the emergent coach is too fixed in their approach. Later, when the coach is more proficient, the focus is on coaching process and the application of this in different circumstances (Megginson & Clutterbuck, 2009; Ives, 2008; Rush & Shelden, 2011). When the coach is suitably skilled they might work from a philosophical standpoint, facilitating the coachee's process according to their own coaching philosophy, and later still, an eclectic approach may be used where coaching strategies are differentially applied according to the specific context.

From the field of executive coaching, Grant (2010) found those who were new to coaching in the workplace had less self-efficacy in coaching and perceived more barriers to its implementation than those who had coached for more than six months. The study suggests professional learning should incorporate aspects that help participants address specific challenges encountered in early

days of coaching, and that "ongoing learning support" should be offered by organisations "to those who have recently completed workplace coaching training, in order to help them persevere through the initial adjustment period as they consolidate and develop their coaching skills" (Grant, 2010, p. 61).

In a mixed-methods participatory action research design study carried out in British Columbia, Tatla et al. (2017) found that coaching competency and clinical application with families was seen as a work in progress for professionals working with school aged acute rehabilitation patients and families. The study investigated whether collaborative coaching was a viable way to increase family-centred practice, and uniquely used an inter-professional learning environment with 27 professionals and 13 family representatives as participants and a certified coach as facilitator. The family representatives helped ensure professional learning workshops and hypothetical cases were "realistic and applicable" (Tatla et al., 2017, p. 605) with their input informing five scenario-based coaching sessions. Part of the reason uptake did not occur as readily as expected was coaching's limited 'fit' in the acute setting, when trust was needed but had not yet been established with families. This finding indicates that the appropriateness of coaching to a setting should be evaluated prior to embarking on professional learning. But, overall inter-professional learning was found to improve knowledge and skills in coaching and learner reactions and perceptions in various scenarios.

Improving professional learning in coaching. Various authors have made suggestions regarding future professional learning in coaching. Stewart and Applequist (2019) suggested that as well as adequate in-service learning opportunities, appropriate pre-service training in teaming and service delivery is required. Sukkar et al. (2016) encouraged focused professional learning in theory and practices associated with coaching, such as family-centred practice, capacity-building, and enhanced parent-professionals relationships, especially if the ECI

professional's original training had a different theoretical approach. Douglas et al. (2019) noted the need for further supervision or coach mentoring as a possible addition to support current professional learning. Participants in Douglas et al.'s study also made a variety of suggestions about how professional learning in coaching could be enhanced, including gaining current knowledge in coaching research, knowing child development, holding prior life experiences and interactional skills, being self-reflective, and having the ability to utilise technology (Douglas et al., 2019). The need for further research in professional learning that looks at best methods for "training and ongoing support" has also been highlighted by Meaden et al. (2018, p. 212); in particular suggesting that investigation is required to look at ways coaching practices can be nuanced to respond to diversity of each family or situation. Overall therefore, the literature calls for improvements in professional learning in coaching.

2.5 Overview of Research Strengths and Limitations

This review has presented literature across three main sections – understandings and the impact of coaching, implementation of coaching, and professional learning in coaching. A brief critical overview of each section will now be presented.

Evolving from a number of disciplinary areas, coaching has strong foundations in learning and psychological theory. Drawing on both general and ECI sources it appears coaching definitions have both changed and narrowed over the past 30 years. In ECI, coaching with families and educators is seen as a relationship-based practice focused on learning and growth of the coachee for the benefit of a child's development and participation in learning activities. There is variance in what comprises the critical aspects of coaching. However, categorising these further into key principles, sequence steps, or strategies may aid understanding. Coaching is very similar to practices such as partnering and collaborative consultation, but is somewhat distinguishable from counselling, supervision, teaching, and mentoring.

Establishing a clear definition of coaching ensures it is both researchable and practically useful (Kemp & Turnbull, 2014). For researchers, this means a study can be replicated; input variables and outcomes measured; and, conclusions drawn about the effectiveness or impact of coaching as an intervention. Although theoretical and review material allow us to understand what coaching is, there is limited empirical data in coaching definitions or aspects from the perspective of either coaches or coachees. For the ECI professional (the focus of the current study), having a clear knowledge of what coaching entails is crucial when applying the practice in the field. When learning to coach and when skills are at an emergent level, having an understanding of what coaching is, is even more important (Bachkirova et al., 2017; Friedman et al., 2012). Therefore, gaining insight into perspectives of what coaching is, could help predict the constructs that the ECI professional will attempt to implement in practice, and adjacently explain to coachees to support their understanding.

The impact of coaching has been found to be positive in most regards. Beneficial outcomes for families, ECI professional coaches themselves, and organisations are all apparent in the literature. Where a goal of inclusion and participation is at stake, coaching has also been found to have positive effects. These findings about the impact of coaching suggest the practice might be more commonly implemented in ECI settings than is currently evident in the research literature.

Research suggests coaching supporting children's development, and inclusion and participation in home and preschool has been implemented in a number of American states, however, it remains under-investigated in other countries. Measures of implementation are important because it doesn't matter how well a practice is theoretically understood if it is not being practiced. Conversely, professionals may be applying what they think is coaching, when the practice in use does not resemble this operationally. To date, survey studies offer limited in-depth information and are frequently organised by pre-determined categories, hereby reducing the

chance for unique data to be gathered. Studies looking specifically at the application of coaching behaviours have noted issues with self-reporting, and found that strategies learned in professional learning did not always translate into practice. Therefore, further research in this area is needed.

Factors supporting and preventing the implementation of coaching have also been identified. These factors provide ideas about how coaching can be adopted more effectively. However, because few studies have investigated challenges of implementation as a main research focus, more studies are needed in this area. In particular, further research is required to identify whether challenges to implementation occur in the initial stages of knowledge acquisition, or somewhere else in the uptake of the new skill.

Professional learning is a necessary activity in the work of an ECI professional, and is seen as a central vehicle for the adoption and application of coaching. Both theoretical, practical, and reflective components are considered important aspects of the professional learning process. Although factors influencing the effectiveness of professional learning are known, there is, as yet, limited research in the area of coaching. While, overall, professional learning in ECI has been documented for evaluative or research purposes, only one relevant study outlines professional learning and its content locally (Graham et al., 2018).

Research has found pre-service professional learning in coaching to be severely limited, and in-service professional learning requiring of further attention. Studies have also inconsistently documented characteristics of professional learning, although some, for example, those associated with the EPIC programme, and SOOPR coaching, outline it more comprehensively. Although the duration and frequency of professional learning and its theoretical and practical components have been somewhat adequately described, informal learning remains largely underreported due to its sometimes psychological nature. Therefore, although some literature includes descriptions of *what* professional learning is occurring, studies designed to understand

the intricacies of *how* ECI professionals learn to coach are relatively few. Even more limited is research that looks at the development of professional understandings about coaching in relation to this learning. Overall, further studies investigating professional learning in coaching are needed to document largely unexplained aspects of what occurs and by which mechanisms, to ascertain how coaching can be learned to support the adoption and application of coaching in field-based settings.

2.6 Conclusion

Taken together, the literature in this review explores three key themes – understandings of coaching in ECI, implementation of coaching, and professional learning in coaching. The review highlights the lack of empirical data in understandings of coaching. It also identifies the dearth of coaching implementation studies outside of North America, and suggests research thus far has failed to capture in-depth information from the coach perspective about how coaching is being carried out. Although some data in the supports and challenges to implementation exist, further work is needed to corroborate these findings, as they remain critical if implementation is to be enhanced. Finally the review uncovered limitations in research in professional learning in coaching, particularly around participants' perspectives and experiences of professional learning, showing the need for further in-depth descriptions in order to capture any informal learning that may occur.

From these largely unexplored areas identified in the review with a particular focus on the locality of Aotearoa New Zealand, three key research questions relating to the learning about and use of coaching can be developed. These are:

- Research Question 1: How are ECI professionals learning about coaching?
- Research Question 2: What understandings of coaching do ECI professionals have?
- Research Question 3: What implementation has occurred?

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology and Methods

This chapter provides an overview of the methodological positioning of the current research study. It describes and justifies the study design and methods including participants and their recruitment, and data collection and its analysis. It also outlines key ethical considerations made prior to and during the research process, and matters relating to study rigour.

3.1 Positioning of the Research Study

3.1.1 Researcher's interest in the study. As outlined in the introduction, my interest in this study came about whilst working as an academic learning facilitator in the early intervention endorsement of the Specialist Teaching programme in Aotearoa New Zealand across 2012-2016. In particular, a request had been made by the Ministry of Education for coaching materials to be included in course content, in line with recommendations in the Early Intervention Practice Framework (MoE, 2011a) (as discussed on page 3 of the Introduction), which recommended a coaching approach be used with educators and families. I needed to decide both which materials to add to existing online professional learning materials, and what methods might best help coaching to be put in practice in the field in the Aotearoa New Zealand setting. I noted at this time that few formal professional learning opportunities were available for ECI professionals to develop their coaching practice in ECI settings. In particular, it was not known what or how individual emerging and experienced professionals were learning about coaching, nor how they were applying it in practice within their everyday work. Due to the nature of ECI services locally (Blackburn, 2016; Liberty, 2014; MoE, 2011b), and the complexities surrounding professional learning (Bruder, 2016; Bruder & Dunst, 2005; Winton, McCollum, & Catlett; 1997) and

application of theoretical and empirical research in practice for ECI professionals in the field in general (Campbell & Halbert, 2002; Dunst & Trivette, 2009a), it was acknowledged a suitably flexible research approach would be required to gain insights into professional learning in coaching.

3.1.2 Researcher's position in the research process. Within qualitative research, it is acknowledged the position of the researcher has influence on the research process (Berger, 2015; Dean et al., 2018). In particular, their understanding of the underlying methodological positioning of the project will guide subsequent choice of methods, and later, relationships with participants, and analysis and interpretation of data (Berger, 2015; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Chiseri-Strater, 1996). Research position is regularly described in ways that identify the researcher as either an insider or outsider of a group. Breen (2007) suggests that roles of both the insider and the outsider have strengths and limitations in the research process, but posits the idea that the "insider/outsider dichotomy is simplistic" and that a more nuanced interpretation might also be taken, which encompasses the "in-between" (p. 163).

There were a number of influences in my own research positionality. My professional training in the field of speech and language therapy in the 1990s led to my employment in ECI teams for the Ministry of Education and Specialist Education services (the predecessor to the Ministry's Special Education service). As an ECI professional, I encouraged parents, caregivers and whānau to play a central role in determining their child's individualised programme, and worked closely with EC educators to apply programme goals under the Te Whāriki curriculum framework (MoE, 1996). As a member of ECI teams, I regularly collaborated with and learned from, other Special Education professionals, particularly early intervention teachers. Although I never worked in the early intervention teacher role myself, experience in the field, close working relationships with early intervention teachers, and knowledge of this specialist educator

role, means like Breen (2007) I considered my position to be neither insider nor outsider and more of an in-between. My role in the Specialist Teaching programme as an academic learning facilitator meant I continued to walk the line between, up to the point when data collection was completed, as within this role I walked alongside emergent early intervention teachers as they learned and developed ethical and effective ECI practice, as well as keeping abreast with the work of early intervention teachers and the key legislation and policy guiding their practice in the field.

3.1.3 Research approach, and ontological and epistemological position. As ECI includes people who hold diverse views on life, and coaching and other ECI practices are conceived and practiced by individuals in specific social, historical and cultural contexts, a qualitative research approach utilising rich, naturalistic descriptive data was chosen (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In line with this qualitative approach, the study was carried out from a relativist ontological position. Ontology concerns beliefs about the nature and form of reality; for example, what reality is and what "can be known" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). Relativism posits that rather than there being one single Truth as in positivism, there are instead multiple realities cognitively-constructed within individuals, based on or in relation to their social interactions and experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; O'Grady, 2014; Sullivan, 2009). These constructions are unique in nature and applicable only to the specific setting, although some may be shared by groups of people. The recognition of (and belief in) the knowledge of others is strongly congruent with ECI literature in humanistic, strength-based and capacity-building practices such as coaching (e.g. An & Palisino, 2013).

Aligning with the relativist ontological position discussed above, I believed it best to carry the study out on a constructivist epistemological basis. Epistemology concerns what and how knowledge is known and by whom (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The constructivist epistemological

position links strongly with the work of Vygotsky, Piaget, and Dewey who saw the learner as active in constructing knowledge (Clark, 2005; Dewey, 1938; Mentis, Annan, & Bowler, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978). Gogus (2012) describes constructivism as:

> "founded on the basis that humans generate knowledge and meaning from their experiences, mental structures, and beliefs that are used to interpret objects and events. Constructivism focuses on the importance of the individual knowledge, beliefs, and skills through the experience of learning. It states that the construction of understanding is a combination of prior knowledge and new information. Individuals can accept new ideas or fit them into their established views of the world" (Gogus, 2012, p. 783)

Hatch (2007) noted that in constructivism "objects of inquiry ought to be individual perspectives that are taken to be constructions of reality" (p. 13). These constructions are flexible and evolving, and are continually challenged and revised in response to social interactions and the cultural historical environment. This study focuses on ECI professionals' learning about and practising coaching within the ECI environment, and in particular about participants' ideas about these activities. Overall, it was believed a constructivist approach was best suited to look at these individual perspectives on learning and coaching within the meaningful context of the ECI workplace.

3.1.4 Theoretical framework underpinning the study. This study has two main foci, coaching and professional learning. Coaching involves shifts in behaviour, attitude, actions, and experience of meaning, and is commonly referred to as a process of adult learning for both coachee and coach (Bachkirova et al., 2014; Cox, 2015; Hicks, 2017; Rush & Shelden, 2011). Professional learning, by nature, also involves learning and change processes. For this reason, I remained cognisant of learning theories throughout the study. Although coaching and professional learning have been linked with a number of specific learning theories and taxonomies including Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, Krathwohl, & Masia, 1984), adult learning

(Knowles; 1970; Knowles et al., 2015), experiential learning (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984); reflective learning (Schön, 1987; 1991) and self-directed learning (Tough, 1971), a broader perspective was taken in the conceptualisation and development of this study. Three main areas of theory were considered. These were cognitive-behavioural, socio-cultural, and socio-material theories (Hager, Lee and Reich, 2012).

Broadly speaking. cognitive-behavioural learning theories concern learning as an individual endeavour with finite bounds because it occurs within the individual, in response to external stimuli. Broken down, behavioural theories "view learning as a change in rate, frequency of occurrence, or form of behaviour or response, which occurs primarily as a function of environmental factors" (Schunk, 2012, p. 21), with the learner playing the role of responder; in contrast cognitive theories see learning as an internal, "mental processing of information" (Schunk, 2012, p. 22), which includes knowledge acquisition, and encoding, retrieval and reorganisation of memory. Although these theories were seen as having some relevance to the study, this area of learning theory overlooks the impact of external factors upon learning, so attention was turned to those fitting more closely with the constructivist approach of the research.

As the current study involved both human and non-human actors (e.g. professional learning tools) it was thought the socio-material theory of Actor Network Theory (Latour, 2005) may offer a suitable theoretical and methodological underpinning. After reading in this area I ruled this out due to the inability of Actor Network Theory to accurately account for the social processes at work in the professional learning and coaching environments. In addition, although Actor Network Theory allowed for both humans and non-human actors (e.g. professional learning tools) to be investigated, the approach appeared to place myself as the researcher in a position of 'one who sees all', rather than giving voice to the participants involved in the study.

Further, informed by Vygotskyan socio-cultural theory and the work of other contributors including Davydov, Leont'ev, Luria, and Rubenstein (Chaiklin, Hedegaard, & Jensen, 1999; Shanahan, 2010) and Engeström (Engeström, 1987; Robertson, 2008), the pan-theoretical framework of Activity Theory was intermittently considered throughout the project (see Mataiti, van Bysterveldt, & Miller, 2016). Activity Theory allows the researcher to look holistically at the individual's internal thoughts and actions, as situated within socio-cultural and historical contexts. A number of studies have utilised Activity Theory as an analytical tool to frame research in practice and development in education and social services (Daniels, 2004; Foot, 2014; Martin, 2008; McNicholl & Blake, 2013; Potari, 2013; Stuart, 2014), including the work of Hopwood and colleagues in ECI family-centred services nearby in Australia (e.g. Hopwood & Mäkitalo, 2019). However, although Activity Theory's framework is considered a useful means for rich description (Peim, 2009), and has been successfully used to support research and practice in professional contexts, I wanted to ensure that the current study data was not forced to conform to this theoretical perspective. Therefore, although it helped in the initial conceptualisation of the research design, particularly in understanding how explicit and implicit rules guide the learning and actions of individals and communities by way of legislation, policies, and cultural-historical beliefs (Engeström, 1987) (for example, the Treaty of Waitangi), it played less of a role in the analysis and interpretation stages of the project.

Overall, socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) was considered the central underpinning of the study, due to its perspective that learning and development occurs both through interactions with people, objects and events in the social context, and intra-psychologically within the individual. Te Whāriki – Aotearoa New Zealand's early childhood curriculum, a document which guides the everyday practice of participants in this study, is also explicitly underpinned by socio-cultural theory.

3.2 Research Design

An emergent qualitative descriptive design was employed to carry out the study (Kim, Sefcik & Bradway 2017; Polit & Beck, 2010). Four main reasons for the choice of design were present. Firstly, an emergent design can be used when aspects of a study are unknown at the outset and it is therefore evolving in nature. Such a design allows the researcher to be open to what emerges through the data collection and analysis process, and requires them to be willing to make further decisions about design and methods based on what is being learned from the data as the study progresses (Polit & Beck, 2010). Secondly, qualitative description was identified as most appropriate for the study due to its function as an in-depth summary of a naturally occurring event, process, or phenomenon; limited theoretical focus; and use of interview methods, purposeful sampling, and content or thematic analysis of data (Kim, Sefcik & Bradway, 2017; Polit & Beck, 2010). Thirdly, as outlined in the Literature Review, although a number of qualitative studies in the learning and implementation of coaching in ECI have now been published, with the exception of Schwellnus et al. (2019) none have taken a qualitative descriptive approach to look at the coaching activities taking place in the naturally occurring environment. Finally, a descriptive research approach was in keeping with the terms by which permission to access participants in the project was negotiated with the Ministry of Education, the main provider and funding body for ECI services in Aotearoa New Zealand.

3.3 Research Methods

3.3.1 The research setting/s. The study was carried out in the context of ECI in Aotearoa New Zealand, and the practice of the early intervention teacher practice and professional learning and development associated with this. Interviews were carried out in the field across multiple sites in both the North and South Island, at governmental and independent provider, and

community (homes, offices, and teaching and learning settings) locations (Neyland, 2008). Tele-communicative spaces were also used for email, and phone calls.

3.3.2 Methods. Two qualitative methods were used for the study. These were interview and documentary analysis methods.

Interview methods. Qualitative interview methods are useful when a small sample of participants is recruited and the time taken to collect and analyse data is seen as a necessary cost to obtain the depth or richness required to fully investigate the topic (Crotty, 1998; Gilham, 2005; Hobson & Townsend, 2010). Although reasonably widely dispersed across Aotearoa New Zealand, access to study participants was not insurmountable and I determined interviews were an appropriate method to gather data in order to gain an understanding of participants' activities and perspectives on coaching, and professional learning surrounding this practice (Gilham, 2005; Hobson & Townsend, 2010). Interview methods have previously been used in ECI research to investigate both participation-based practices and coaching but the current study is one of few where interview data has made a substantive contribution. For example, with the exception of Stewart & Applequist (2019), interviews in other studies appear to have been carried out to supplement other research methods such as video analysis and surveys (Douglas et al., 2019; Fleming, Sawyer, & Campbell, 2011; Knoche et al., 2013; Salisbury et al., 2017).

Semi-structuring of the interviews was planned, with the intention that both myself as researcher/interviewer and participants would have some degree of control over the direction in which the interviews progressed (Hobson & Townsend, 2010). The influence of the researcher in the interview process has been seen as a limitation of interview methods, however:

> "most 'qualitative' researchers accept that this is the case suggesting that it is an inevitable consequence of all methods of data generation, and that what is important is to

> embrace reflexivity, to be transparent about the 'baggage' that they may have bought to the research and open about potential effects that this may have on research findings"
>
> (Hobson & Townsend, 2010 p. 228)

Because I had not worked as an early intervention teacher but had some in-depth inside knowledge about the ECI context, interviews were to be carried out from an in-between rather than an insider or outsider position (Breen, 2007). In all cases this background was known or made known to the participants prior to their interviews.

Finally, interviews were chosen as a data collection method in order to allow a group of participants who rarely have opportunity to express their perspectives on an important yet potentially sensitive topic, which has relevance to their own practice and wider ECI outcomes. However, in order to do so a data collection method characterised by a high level of openness and relational trust was needed. As such, I planned that interviews would be carried out face-to-face and that rapport would be built through the interview scheduling process. This method was deemed more appropriate than phone interviews as in Douglas et al. (2019), or surveys like Meaden et al. (2018) and Schachter et al. (2019), and more in keeping with the paradigm associated with the research topic of coaching.

Documentary analysis methods. Documentary analysis was considered as a method to supplement the primary method of interviewing, through triangulation (Bowen, 2009). Formal public documents pertaining to ECE, ECI and coaching in the Aotearoa New Zealand context were scanned for relevant information for triangulation of participant data. These included legislative, policy and practice documents, and the EC curriculum.

3.4 Participant Sampling and Selection

A diverse group of ECI professionals work in teams in the ECI context in Aotearoa New Zealand (See Appendix A). This study focused on the practice of a specific ECI professional -

the early intervention teacher. Early intervention teachers work for organisations providing ECI services in ECE which includes the Ministry of Education (MoE) and independent providers (funded by the MoE and other streams). These services are itinerant and community based, centred based, or a mixture of the two. In addition some services are affiliated to another disability services provider such as Conductive Education, or based in a Kaupapa Māori philosophy e.g. Ohomairangi Trust. For the purpose of the study, all participants were described as 'ECI professionals'. Non-probabilistic purposive sampling was used to select participants who could share insights in the practice of coaching in the ECI context. As is the case with purposive sampling, no specific sample size was sought at the outset of the study (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2014). However, based on the empirical findings of Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006), it was estimated that at least 12 participants would be needed to achieve thematic saturation in analysing interview data.

Purposive sampling involves making a "deliberate choice" of participant due to the "qualities" they have (Etikan et al., 2014, p. 2). In order to gain insight into the perspectives of different knowledge and experiences of coaching, participants were selected for the study based on their years of experience working in the ECI field (for example whether they were experienced or emerging), the roles held in early intervention teacher practice (for example as field practitioner, leader or advisor), varying experiences of professional learning in coaching, and location across North and South Island location, in urban and semi-rural centres, and with governmental or independent providers. Etikan et al. (2014) refer to this as maximum variation purposive sampling, where a heterogeneous group representing a broad spectrum of the phenomenon is researched. It was deemed to be important to include those with little or no experience of coaching or training in coaching to gain a richer description of what was occurring, and because where training or experience of coaching are qualifying factors for research participation (for

example, Meaden et al., 2018), valuable information about the implementation of coaching may be overlooked.

Although further detail is precluded due to the small number of ECI professionals working in the field locally and the need to protect confidentiality, a general description of the selected participants follows. In all, 15 female participants were recruited for the study. This gender imbalance aligns with data suggesting an almost exclusively female Early Years workforce in Aotearoa New Zealand (ChildForum, 2017), and no male enrolments in Specialist Teaching early intervention endorsement since the current contract began in 2011. Participants were either currently emerging (n = 3) or practising early intervention teachers (n = 8), or involved in the support or management of early intervention teacher practice with experience working in ECI roles (n = 4). Of the 15, eight participants held early intervention teaching qualifications, five were currently undertaking training, and two held qualifications relevant to their work in ECI. Seventy percent of participants worked for a government provider whilst 30 percent worked for independent providers. This split was almost representative of the 80 to 20 percent split between provider types (see Appendix A), and allowed the inclusion of a wider knowledge base. All participants indicated their background work experience prior to working in ECI which included roles in EC and compulsory sector education, as teachers including in education outside the classroom and special education, and as education support workers, or as therapists in allied health disciplines. Where full background data was disclosed (n = 13), participants indicated they had between 2 and at least 25 years' experience working in ECI.

3.5 The Research Process (*Procedure and materials*)

3.5.1 Project development. The initial concept for the project was accepted by the University of Canterbury School of Health Sciences postgraduate research panel, in October

2013. Work on the project began in March 2014 once student enrolment was complete. An ethics application for the study was approved in July 2014 and will be discussed in more detail in section 3.6. A formal research proposal was accepted by the university's postgraduate office in September 2014, and the project confirmed through a peer-critiqued presentation in February 2015.

3.5.2 Access to participants. Access to participants was negotiated with two main bodies. In April 2014 an application was made to the Specialist Teaching research committee (with representatives from both Massey University and the University of Canterbury), who approved access to participants who might be emerging or practising early intervention teachers undergoing early intervention teacher training (personal communication, 2014). The overall project concept and proposal for access to participants was also presented to and approved by MoE through a series of communications with an internal representative, between May and September 2014 (personal communication, 2014b). This included formal and informal introductions, emails, and phone-calls, to ensure the project aligned with internal research and legal processes. The representative was also an initial point of contact for access to prospective participants from both MoE and independent provider settings.

3.5.3 Data Collection.

Data Sources. At the outset, in order to retain some flexibility in the design and research process, a range of naturalistic and generative data collection methods were planned in order to gather thick data (Fetterman, 2010; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). However, it soon became apparent that narrowing from numerous methods, to one main data source would result in sufficient data to carry out this in-depth study. Main data were collected through the recording and transcription of face-to-face semi structured interviews, up to approximately one hour in length. Written data

sources collected as part of the interview process included emails; notes taken by the researcher at the time of interviews; and additional information about qualifications, work experience and prior professional learning in coaching communicated by the participant to the researcher in writing, and shared either by email or in hard copy face-to-face. As discussed earlier, documentary sources were also collated for analysis. These were gathered from the internet, library database and catalogue searches, and through personal communication via email with relevant personnel.

Data management. Once collected, data were stored securely on password protected computer facilities or in locked storage at the University of Canterbury, College of Education, Health, and Human Development site. In keeping with University of Canterbury ethical requirements, doctoral project data is stored for ten years after which it is destroyed. Participants were informed of this prior to their participation.

Interview recordings. Fifteen participant interviews were carried out between October 2014 and December 2016. These were recorded on an electronic recording device which was placed on a flat surface near the participant and researcher as the conversation occurred. Recordings were between 31 and 66 minutes long and were transferred to and stored on the researcher's computer, and saved separately for each participant in the secure conditions as stated above.

Interview participant recruitment. As per the negotiated access conditions, all participants were contacted through a manager or team leader or via a personal invitation email which contained an information letter (Appendix B). Once an interest in participation had been indicated, interviews were arranged by phone or email between the participant and researcher to suit the participants' needs, but at times where the researcher may be in a nearby location. Written consent was obtained from each participant before each interview. Identification of next possible

participants occurred through preliminary data analysis processes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Yeh & Inman, 2007) or were suggested by an intermediary, again, due to the nature of the access conditions. Not all prospective participants decided to be involved in the study, with contact made with an additional four ECI professionals (19 February 2015, 19 June 2015, 24 September 2015, 30 October 2015), who chose not to be interviewed due to work responsibilities, leave arrangements, or other undisclosed reasons.

Interview questions. A set of semi structured interview questions was developed in line with research literature and study research questions for the original research proposal. These questions were used in Interview 1 (see Appendix C) and adjusted for the second interview according to my interview notes and Analytical Memo 1 which discussed appropriateness of questions, any additional questions that had arisen, and question delivery. This process fits with Yeh and Inman (2007) explanation of how data analysis is "part of a rotating cycle, which can offer spaces for collecting new and better data", p. 385). Subsequent adaption of interview questions was carried out in a similar way. By the time ten participants had been interviewed a more refined set of interview questions had been reached in line with the evolving nature of the study (Appendix C). Question development was discussed and guided by supervisors, and by face-to-face peer review in the confirmation presentation process.

The semi structured interview questions were documented and taken by the researcher to each interview on a hard copy sheet. To achieve a degree of naturalness in delivery, questions were sometime re-worded or the order was changed according to how the interview 'conversation' was developing. For the first interview, the participant requested to see the questions before the interview and these were sent by email. However, this appeared to be because they were concerned about how the questions could be correctly answered. Therefore, in subsequent interviews, participants were told early in the recruitment or interview process there were no right

or wrong answers to questions. Supplementary to the interview recording, interview field notes were written within twenty-four hours after each interview to capture the stories and themes that were noticeably present whilst listening to the interview in person. For expediency, background qualification, work experience and coaching information for the final five interviews, were gathered in writing prior to the interview by way of a question sheet, rather than during or after the interview process as had occurred in the first ten interviews.

Transcription. Transcription of interview recording was carried out as close as possible to the time of the recording. The recordings were transcribed verbatim, and formatted on a Microsoft Word document, using the initials of researcher and participant to denote the speaker. All completed transcripts were sent to participants via email for member checking, so that editing or reconfiguring could take place to ensure participants' perspectives were accurately conveyed (Shenton, 2004). Other than minor punctuation and grammatical changes, two participants withdrew or re-worded comments, and another extensively summarised her contribution with no further additions.

3.5.4 Data analysis and interpretation.

Thematic analysis. Data analysis in qualitative research is "a circular, fluid and ongoing process that requires examination and re-examination on multiple levels at different points in time" (Yeh & Inman, 2007, p. 384). Initial analysis using interpretive phenomenological analysis (Smith, Larkin, & Flowers, 2009) was undertaken for the transcript of Participant 1 to determine its suitability for the project. This approach was ruled out as a subsequence of feedback during my research confirmation process which questioned the alignment of interview questions and participant responses with the interpretive phenomenological analysis method. After further reading, I instead chose thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Gilham, 2005; Ryan & Bernard, 2003) to analyse data. In line with a constructionist approach, through this process I

took events, perspectives and experiences reported by participants as being influenced by societal and community discourses (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Analysis was undertaken in three cyclical layers (Yeh & Inman, 2007). Initial analysis of transcripts of Participants 1 and 2 in particular informed the evolving project, although reflexive processes in response to the data were ongoing. Further, partial analysis took place in conjunction with presentation preparation for three local conferences (with five, and ten interviews completed at these junctures). Finally, whole data analysis of 15 participant transcripts to identify and confirm research themes took place between December 2018 and June 2019, and re-visitation of a section of this analysis took part in March 2020. It is noted that final data analysis was carried out some time after data collection. However, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) suggest distancing oneself from the data may be a good thing because it ensures the relationship with the research data is separated from the data collection process.

My data analysis process comprised four main steps adapted from Braun and Clarke's suggested thematic analysis protocol (2006). Data analysis began with re-listening to the interview during transcription, and reading and re-reading of the transcripts and interview field notes to familiarise myself with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Heppner, Kivlighan, & Wampold, 1999). Next, a coding process took place (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). This process was both deductive, in line with areas of interview questioning; and inductive, where coding was being directed by the data (The University of Auckland, 2019). Coding was carried out by highlighting and writing a coding note for a clause, sentence or paragraph directly on the manuscript either electronically or in hardcopy (see Appendix D). Coding was categorised and analytical memos were developed to note ideas about possible themes (see Appendix D). After this, themes were identified from the coding. This was done by surveying the coded data to visualise main themes and sub-themes – a process where mind maps and tables were utilised

(Appendix D). When the overall number of themes was too many, these were collapsed into subthemes under a centralised theme, whilst miscellaneous themes that had only one example were set aside. Finally, a review process was undertaken, to check that themes were distinguishably different from each other, but had internal coherence (Patton, 1990).

3.6 Ethical Considerations

As the study involved live participants and concerned professional practice and learning of qualified professionals working in the field, an ethics application was made to the University of Canterbury Education Research Human Ethics Committee (ERHEC), and was subsequently approved (see Appendix E). Several key ethical considerations were made at the outset of the project, and their planned management was included in the application. As researchers have an ongoing commitment to ethical research practice beyond such formal applications and approvals, "ethical decision making" was maintained throughout the duration of a research process (Cullen, Hedges, & Bone, 2009, p. 109). Any ethical issues that arose over the course of the project were documented and discussed verbally with PhD supervisors.

3.6.1 Obligations to the Treaty of Waitangi. Due to the Aotearoa New Zealand context of the study the obligation for ECI providers to work in alignment with the Treaty of Waitangi, the EC curriculum being a bi-cultural document, and the potential for independent providers to be practising within a kaupapa Māori framework, it was important to ensure the overall methodology and methods of the study were developed in line with the underlying principles of the Treaty. The principle of self-determination was honoured by employing research processes that accommodated the direction of the data; for example, the adaptation and responsiveness of research questions. In line with the principle of participation, I acknowledged participants' willingness to participate in the interview process by securely representing their views and experiences, and actively managing any potential conflicts of interest. In line with partnership, I

acknowledged the previous and current relationships I held with participants, both earlier as colleagues, and currently as researcher and ECI professionals. In line with the principle of protection, I ensured participants' safety to speak, within organisational protocols, and enabled their voices to be accurately portrayed whilst ensuring their identity was protected.

As the research had potential to involve participants identifying as Māori, contact was made with Dr Sonja Macfarlane, who had responsibilities in the area of Māori and multicultural support in the College of Education, Health, and Human Development, whose guidance was available to access in an ongoing capacity, as required. A copy of the ethics application was also forwarded to the University of Canterbury Māori Research Advisory Group for their viewing and recommendations.

3.6.2 Informed consent. All participants were given information about the project in writing (see Appendix B) with opportunity to discuss further with project supervisors or the researcher if they chose to. All participants signed a consent form (see Appendix F) prior to participating in their interview with the researcher. These were either handed to the researcher in person or emailed to the researcher's email address. Copies of all consents were saved on file. All participants were given opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time.

3.6.3 Protecting confidentiality. Numbers of early intervention teachers working in the ECI community in Aotearoa New Zealand are relatively small. Although confidentiality of participants was assured, anonymity was not promised (see Appendix B & F). For example, the researcher was unable to predict how participants might discuss their involvement with others, and access to some participants was granted contingent on a manager being cc'ed into each invitation email. With opposing considerations such as some participants being willing to be known rather than anonymous, whilst some contributing bodies preferring participants not be specifically identified as their employees, there was also a need to develop and use acceptable

qualitative research protocol to ensure spoken excerpts could not be traced to particular individuals in organisations. In the information letter and again reinforced at the time of transcript checking, participants were informed all data would be assigned code names or generic descriptors to ensure as much anonymity as possible.

3.6.4 Relationship with participants. Due to the size and nature of ECI in Aotearoa New Zealand, my familiarity with and in the sector was inevitable. As a previous employee of the MoE, I had held earlier working relationships with some participants in the study. For example at one point in the research process I was identified by a participant as "one of us". This alerted me to the familiarity people had, which could have been interpreted as allowing participants to feel comfortable to speak openly to me. I sought to maintain a professional but friendly manner, conversing informally prior to interviews, and becoming somewhat more formal during the interviews themselves. In interviewing, I aimed to play the role of listener, using enough conversational interaction to keep the process as natural as possible without influencing it considerably. However, it was accepted that my presence as researcher may have had some influence on the data collected (Berger, 2015; Dean et al., 2018).

In addition whilst working on the project I was employed as an academic learning facilitator in the Specialist Teaching programme (up until January 2017). This meant a certain level of immersion in the ECI context in Aotearoa New Zealand, and in teaching and learning relationships with students. In order to ensure strong boundaries around the project, I took care to separate work and study activities, for example, by the maintenance of different computer login and passwords, email addresses, and workspaces.

3.6.5 Preventing coercion. Some participants in the study were students in the Specialist Teaching programme in which I worked as a staff member. While explicitly facilitating the genesis and undertaking of the project, this potentiated a conflict of interest which was declared

from the outset. I made a conscious effort to prioritise my professional role, and obligations to the University of Canterbury and the students undertaking the courses by establishing working relationships for this purpose, rather than thoughts of prospective participation in the study. Potential perceived risks associated with student participation in the study were identified and steps for mitigation outlined as part of the University of Canterbury Education Research Human Ethics Committee application that was subsequently approved. For example, participation/non-participation in the research may have been potentially perceived as having some influence on assessment outcomes for participants. To mitigate this risk, prospective interview participants in the programme were well informed that study participation was voluntary, and measures were taken regarding which papers I marked and held responsibility for overall grading of, in the year of data collection. In addition, interviews were carried out after the completion of the course at the end of semester. Furthermore, although lead supervisor Dr Anne van Bysterveldt also had some oversight of the course in semester 1, she had no influence on assignment grades, was away on sabbatical in semester 2, and left the programme upon her return.

3.7 Ensuring Study Rigour

Qualitative studies assure research rigour through principles of trustworthiness such as reciprocity (Harrison, McGibbon & Morton, 2001), credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These differ from measures taken in traditional, quantitative methods which seek to prove reliability, validity, generalisability and objectivity (Shenton, 2004).

In alignment with research principles of trustworthiness I worked to ensure rigour in the research study in a number of ways. The principle of reciprocity (Harrison, McGibbon & Morton, 2001) was achieved first and foremost by maintaining open channels of communication with participants (through phone, email or Skype) prior to and after their involvement in the interview.

In addition, participants were asked if they would like to receive regular updates about the project, including reports on findings. For example, they were given opportunity to respond to findings prior to their presentation at conferences. Further, available professional learning content in coaching was shared with those participants who wished to engage with it for their own learning, and in a similar fashion some resources were exchanged with myself in return.

Credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004) of the research was maximised through the use of semi-structured interviewing as a recognized research method (Crotty, 1998; Gilham, 2005; Hobson & Townsend, 2010). This was supplemented by research documentation, as outlined in the paragraph below. As well, the fair and honest representation of participants' perspectives was maximised by ensuring they were aware of the voluntary nature of the study, and through the use of member checks where I invited them to look over and make changes to written transcripts and personal documentation. This ensured they felt comfortable that what was recorded was accurate and faithfully represented, prior to any thematic coding. Additionally, my background working in ECI as a speech language therapist and subsequent research master's degree alongside other postgraduate qualifications meant that participants and their employer organisations saw my project as a worthwhile and credible endeavour. Further, triangulation of theory was employed by taking multiple theoretical perspectives through planning and data interpretation stages of the project (Neuman, 2006). Moreover, as discussed by Shenton (2004) a further indication of credibility in this study was in how the negative case was utilised during data analysis and reporting. Specifically, I viewed the negation of a concept in the data as helping support a code or theme's existence (especially where this confirmed an already identified code or theme). Finally, project scrutiny occurred through monthly research supervision sessions with primary supervisors, discussions with PhD colleagues undertaking qualitative research methods, the Health Sciences research community and postgraduate research hub, local conference

audiences, and feedback from those in the ECI field. In particular, supervisors and a colleague were involved in processes of checking and feeding back on coding and thematising data.

Closely linked with credibility, dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was maximised through ongoing documentation of research processes in the form of interview field notes, a reflective research journal, and analytical memos alongside analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This enabled the design, methodology, and methods of the research to be recorded and reported in some detail, in order for design and methods (and project results) to be repeatable, should a reader attempt to do so (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). Research documentation also provided an audit trail which allowed adherence to the research principle of confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). The research journal for example, allowed me to check my assumptions through documenting my ongoing reflexive thinking in relation to the research, but without unnecessarily incorporating my views. This was carried out in conjunction with discussion and questioning of my supervisory team. The writing of my researcher position statement then putting this to one side as I embarked on the study also ensured my own biases were made explicit prior to beginning the data collection phase of the research.

Finally, the principle of transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004) was sought by detailing the context, data collection methods and duration, and participants in the study. In this way, any reader seeking to transfer findings to their own context would have adequate detail to make their own inferences (Trochim, 2020; Shenton, 2004). A balance was needed to ensure detail provided was sufficient to inform the reader, whilst also protecting study participants, given the small field of ECI in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The three following chapters each present findings which address the individual research questions outlined at the end of the Literature Review. As mentioned in the Introduction, relevant discussion is included at the end of each findings chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings 1 - How are ECI Professionals Learning about Coaching?

This chapter contains findings which seek to explain how ECI professionals who work in early education settings in Aotearoa New Zealand, are learning about coaching. The findings are presented in two main sections. The first section is about participants' readiness for professional learning in coaching. The second section presents the range of professional learning mechanisms reported by participants, including the role of routine-based early intervention and routines-based interviewing in shifting toward a coaching approach (McWilliam, 2010).

4.1 Readiness for Professional Learning in Coaching

As stated earlier on page 40 of the Literature Review, the effectiveness of professional learning and development for ECI professionals is influenced by the professional's readiness for learning and change. Multiple factors have been identified as contributing to readiness including an individual's perceptions about the need for change and their willingness to modify attitude and behavioural skills (Chu & Tsai, 2009; Hetzner et al., 2012; Lai, 2011; Premkumar et al., 2018; Slater et al., 2017). In my study, participant data revealed conditions of readiness that were present in the early stages of professional learning, which contributed to the end-goal of coaching application for many ECI professionals.

Although the exact term 'ready' was only used a few times, for example,

> they're really ready for the coaching stuff… [Participant 1]

a number of factors contributing to participants' readiness to learn about coaching were clearly identified. These were: 1) professional background, 2) participant understanding of the relevance

of coaching, 3) professional interest and motivation, 4) understanding coaching as a practice, and 5) the characteristics of the learning environment.

4.1.1 Professional background. What did ECI professionals bring to the professional learning context? ECI professionals have diverse personal and professional backgrounds and experiences of professional practice and new professional learning opportunities. Overall professional qualifications of participants are outlined in the Methodology and Methods section (pages 63-64). These qualifications and years of experience working in the early years meant that ECI professionals were well-placed for taking on board professional learning in coaching. In terms of practice-specific learning, participants who trained prior to the Specialist Teaching programme tended to report little to no background in coaching or other similar interactional practices during EC or ECI training, although one participant shared:

> There was one communication module, or paper module. We did a communication skills paper back then. So that…you know and there was some usefulness in that. But not in depth and particularly there wasn't a lot of focus on how you would talk, like how to motivate people … [Participant 8]

Four participants training in the Specialist Teaching programme reported background experience of professional learning in coaching, prior to specific learning about coaching in coursework. This took the form of being informally coached by an ECI team member, involvement in a presentation by Advisors of Deaf children and speech language therapist to an ECE team, discussion with peers who knew about the practice, self-directed learning in the first year of the Specialist Teaching course, involvement in a research project involving the practice, or as part of supervision and self-review.

In addition to any early exposure to precursory and related practices through ECE and ECI training, just over half of participants discussed participation in professional learning for formal or evidence-based ECI programmes which introduced aspects of coaching. Mentioned in

particular were the routines-based early intervention approach which appeared to have a special impact on learning and will be discussed later in this chapter, Hanen (both face-to-face and online versions) (The Hanen Center, 2019), Triple P (The University of Queensland, 2019), Peer Coaching (Hooker, 2013), and Incredible Years (IY) (The Incredible Years, 2019) courses, and an online key worker course (for example, Noah's Ark, 2019). EC pedagogy and leadership was also mentioned. Some ECI professionals had participated in IY as an educator participant while others were involved in the delivery of this course. As Participant 2 pointed out, it was hard to know if professionals' current need was simply to synthesise and apply in practice what they already knew theoretically about coaching from exposure through these courses, or whether they needed something else – in her words, "using what we've got versus something specific" [Participant 2].

4.1.2 Relevance of coaching. Participants shared their thoughts about why coaching was relevant in the current ECI context. Their reasons fell into three main areas. Firstly, they indicated there was support for practices such as coaching in the research literature. Secondly, they mentioned links between coaching and current legislation, policy, practice and curriculum documents, which in some ways guided organisational and management directions. Finally, they perceived there to be a need for such a practice, based on their own insights as ECI professionals.

Research literature. Participants mentioned research generically, including statements about the availability of coaching articles and sources providing information about differences between new and old practices (for example, Participants 5, 7, 12, 13).

> I think you know when you look at literature it's definitely coming in and I suppose that's what's sort of what sparked my feeling and thinking with early intervention is looking at what's happening…probably in the last probably five plus years
>
> [Participant 5]

They also talked about influential ECI authors such as Dunst and McWilliam whose work paved the way for application of facilitative and participatory practices (Participant 3). A number of participants acknowledged research sources that supported the application of coaching in early years settings. For example and in particular, the majority of participants mentioned the work of Shelden and Rush and colleagues (Hanft et al., 2004; Rush & Shelden, 2011), which were based on a comprehensive review of coaching literature available at the time.

Links with guiding documents and organisational advocacy. Guided by interview questioning, a few participants discussed the alignment between coaching and local legislative, policy, practice, and curriculum documents. These included the Treaty of Waitangi, the New Zealand Disability Strategy (2016 - 2026) (Office for Disability Issues, 2016), the Early Intervention Practice Framework (MoE, 2011a), Success for All (Beehive.govt.nz, 2010; MoE, 2014), Collaboration for Success (MoE, 2011c), and Te Whāriki – the EC curriculum (MoE, 1996; 2017).

Though the link between coaching and collaboration and capacity-building initiatives was mostly implied rather than specifically stated, participants did make some reference to these. For example, Participant 11 suggested the move toward collaborative practices was:

> a bit of a thing for the Ministry at the moment…they're all working that way and so there's a push in each of the different areas to strengthen those practices
>
> [Participant 11]

Others described capacity-building in the ECI context. For example:

> I think it's that mindset that we're not the experts, that we're building capacity for our parents because usually we're looking at our littlies and if we can empower parents and teachers then it's going to… they can do better with the children
>
> [Participant 10]

Aligning with the position of these guiding documents and directions, organisational or top-down advocacy for coaching and similar practices was mentioned by a few participants. For example:

> We've all been alerted to do reading. We've been given bits and pieces…
>
> [Participant 7]

However, from other participants and personal communication (2016) during the time of data collection, it was made clear that the push for coaching was *not* purely organisational, and was equally instigated by field staff themselves e.g. "it's not just coming top heavy so to speak" (Participant 10). Furthermore, even though the main ECI guideline - the Early Intervention Practice Framework (MoE, 2011a) states an expectation that ECI professionals will coach, only some participants considered there to be relatedness between coaching, and policy and practice initiatives (with mention of these at times superficial). This also suggests a bottom-up approach to coaching implementation initiated by staff in the field was as likely as any strong organisational directive.

Perceived need for coaching as a practice. Field experiences and professional judgment had shown many participants there was need for a practice such as coaching. This was because coaching was perceived as a way of being able to support engagement of the adults around the child in the ECI process, and to address difficulties with interactions and dynamics between professional-parent and professional-educator.

In relation to coaching offering a way of supporting engagement, particularly with diverse and hard to reach families, one participant noted:

> I guess one of the things that sticks out for me is it doesn't matter how good your strategies are if a parent won't engage… I guess it's [coaching is] the way
>
> [Participant 11]

Similarly, from another participant:

> I think that this coaching practice really is one tool that we can take to our work early, to be able to see, well what is working here?
>
> [Participant 3]

Participants also saw coaching as a way of addressing the dynamics present within professional relationships. For example, it was noted that even if ECI services were relationship-based and professionals were "fantastic" and 'nice', an inherent expert driven model had "set families up to fail" due to the (perhaps unintentional) creation of conditions of dependency (Participant 1). Another participant similarly described how ECI professionals sometimes disempowered the parent by directing and making judgmental comments:

> The parent might think**……** she's a nice lady that came and helped me…oh golly did she say that I didn't do a good job of that [Participant 9]

This showed that although from the outside services might seem to be relationship-based and positive, an underlying imbalance of power was present, which meant an undue reliance on the professional. In this situation, the professional might see themself as having more knowledge than the parent or educator, and take on a position where they cast judgement on their actions. Coaching was viewed by participants as offering a different way of working that balanced these power discrepancies.

The perceived need for coaching was also revealed through participants' descriptions of how the practice could subsequently strengthen relationships between professionals, and families and educators; turning attention to strengths; and fostering empowerment, independence, and self-determination [as discussed by Participants including 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 11], strategies which also align with family-centred practice in the Early Intervention Practice Framework (MoE, 2011a). For example, as explained by Participant 5:

> I think it is that whole empowering people to make the best decisions with the best information for them at that moment in time….if you've never been empowered to make your own decisions or what you want how are you then going to go into independent living, how are you going to make choices … [Participant 5]

Here, coaching was described as a means to empower the coachee to make their own decisions and choices, something which has historically been overlooked for people with disabilities.

Coaching was perceived as a practice that was needed to help create change in the way services were delivered.

In relation to the perceptions above, there appeared to be self-awareness about the nature of interactions occurring between the professionals themselves and parents and other adults around the child. For example:

> practitioners acknowledge traditional ECI approaches do not necessarily work, our natural instinct I think probably a generational thing… is to rescue and is to tell and to do for, especially someone like me who's come from a teaching background when you show someone how to do it then you help them do it….if we're really serious about building capability, then we've got to… whether we call it coaching or whatever, then we have to really start thinking about the way we interact with our families. I see it as being really key [Participant 2]

Here the participant's offering indicated insight into how practice was currently occurring, and how it might take place in the future, which demonstrated her reflection on the perceived need for a coaching approach when working with families.

4.1.3 Professional interest and motivations. There was some indication of personal interest in, and professional motivation for coaching.

A few participants discussed how they became interested in coaching. One participant described how a workplace colleague from another discipline invited her and an ECI peer to be coaching 'guinea pigs'. Three other participants spoke about how their interest was piqued when they attended earlier workshops in coaching. Therefore, both spontaneous and organised events were influential.

Professional motivation to pursue professional learning in coaching appeared to be at both individual and collective levels. When considering collective motivation, one participant shared about her ECI professional peers:

> we've already got a lot of this in place and that it's just a case of … people feeling more intentional, cause they're telling me that they want more on this. [Participant 2]

Individual professional motivations to coach appeared to be more strongly linked with the perceived need for a practice such as coaching, to empower adults supporting the child's learning and participation (see section above).

One-third of participants specifically shared their reasons for pursuing professional learning in coaching at the 'beginning' when they knew very little. Generally speaking, they thought their current practice could be enhanced by learning new theoretical knowledge and how to practically apply coaching strategies (Participants 11, 12, 13, 14, 15). Here, one participant offered further insight into why she had been keen to pursue further professional learning in coaching:

> my awareness of my unsuccessful attempts at coaching in the past
>
> [Participant 14]

ECI professionals' awareness about their own lack of capacity in coaching (as in the above excerpt) was a motivator, especially when combined with the perceived need for the practice. Gaining awareness through engagement in reflective processes was acknowledged by numerous participants to be an integral aspect of both professional learning as a whole and learning how to coach in particular.

4.1.4 Participants' existent coaching knowledge before professional learning. Data suggested it is difficult to pinpoint where exactly professional learning in coaching began for each professional. This was due to the wider professional learning context, differing professional learning experiences, connectedness between professional learning, and unpredictability of the reflection process. However, participants were asked to share their retrospective accounts of what they thought coaching was prior to participating in professional learning in coaching. Findings from two-thirds of participants showed that despite having some relevant background

professional experiences, and participating in other professional learning opportunities that contributed to their theoretical understanding of coaching, most participants had no specific formal training in the practice, and their coaching knowledge was emergent prior to coaching-specific professional learning. In particular, four participants admitted they were unsure about what coaching was or whether they had the right idea about it, while just one participant disclosed she had not heard the term before – though she likely answered this in relation to the ECI context itself. Most commonly, participants associated the term coaching with sport. For example:

> probably only in regards to sport coaching to be honest. I'd never thought of it in any other ways or heard that term used. And, I would think of it in regards to a coach of a sports team… [Participant 4]

A few participants suggested coaching was new i.e. a "relatively new concept" [Participant 6] but one had heard of "life coaching", and the idea of coaching being more frequently discussed over the "last five years". Another participant similarly discussed the idea of coaching appearing in the last five years in therapeutic circles as evidenced in practice research literature.

Almost one-quarter of participants' descriptions indicated they believed coaching to be similar to the way they had been working with families and educators to date – for example listening, assessing, advising or instructing:

> …listening to that parent's story, probably finding out where the child was at but probably more assessed until the cows came home…and developmental levels and all that sort of thing, it was kind of looking at all of that and then still coming in and probably making lots of suggestions that you know… [Participant 7]

And, positioning themselves as the expert:

> I'd pictured coaching as… putting myself as the expert … [Participant 15]
>
> So I think it was more driven by us probably… in a … very well-meaning way but still more of that kind of expert-y sort of, you know… this is what I think should be next …But I felt that we probably guided it way more rather than that kind of partnership really…as I say…learning more about coaching…it's definitely not that [Participant 7]

Only one participant suggested even at this early stage, that she was aware coaching was facilitative:

> I remember …thinking that it must be something like, where you're kind of like, helping people to help themselves, rather than doing it for them I remember that's what I thought [Participant 12]

This participant was an experienced EC professional who appeared to have early exposure to the idea of coaching. Specifically, she noted some congruence between her ECE pedagogy and a coaching approach, and had spoken about coaching with peers.

4.1.5 Contexts in which participants were learning how to coach. In line with socio-cultural theory, participants shared information about the contexts of their professional learning in coaching. They described a broader ECI environment where a broad paradigmatic shift was occurring, and there were three main professional learning contexts, which will be described in more detail below.

A shifting ECI context. Changing practices and a shifting ECI context were indicated in participant data. For example many participants referred to a 'shift', 'movement', or something different happening. Some discussed where ECI practice had come from (e.g. 'the old way'), and where it was going to (e.g. 'the new way'). Many referred directly to coaching as a means for something else to happen, for example, they perceived coaching to be part of a wider shift, acting as an instrument of change. An explanation of the shift and the instrumental role of coaching in this form was described by one participant (please note this interview excerpt was revised in writing by the participant, hence the use of brackets):

> Traditional specialist support and services focused on the child (e.g. clinic, therapy), [however] research tells us that specialist support and services [are] more effective in achieving good outcomes for the child if we focus on building the confidence and capacity of the adults around the child (e.g. understanding the adult priorities and strengths, and build their skills to support the child throughout the naturally occurring events in child's day and in the longer term)…Coaching practices, as an approach in EI, supports the practitioner move from a traditional approach to intervention to a professionally

> supported model of intervention. Coaching skills support the development of relationships (Practitioner/ Parent and Practitioner/Teacher); finding out what is important to the adult; understanding impact of any problem/issue; identifying strengths and developing these; and result in independence through developing confidence, capability and empowerment (e.g. how to reflect on what they have tried, how to problem-solve and find a way forward etc.) [Participant 3]

The shift was also noted to be an attitudinal one:

> this whole coaching and everything it's just a mind shift… a huge mind shift. And I don't know whether you can get…hopefully with training you know that will come through [Participant 5]

The professional learning context. The three main professional learning contexts described by study participants were the 1) larger organisational implementation, 2) independent provider context, and 3) the Specialist Teaching Programme.

Larger organisational implementation. As discussed in Appendix A, in Aotearoa New Zealand, the majority (80%) of ECI services are delivered by the MoE. Guiding learning collectively and individually in this context, participants reported induction programming, ongoing professional learning planning, and regional professional development days held approximately three times per year. For example, in Region Y participants discussed learning in the induction period and the current professional development plan and a regional professional development day, to introduce coaching methodology and to support its application. However, Participant 4 reported these regional days may include professionals other than early intervention teachers and she found, as a newcomer, they were quite 'cliquey' (which means the initial coaching condition of psychological safety may not have been present). She mentioned the need for teaming and learning across disciplines. 'Learning from each other' or *ako* was also identified in the data as characteristic of the coaching paradigm.

A number of participants described how recent professional learning in this large organisation setting had two main foci. Firstly, the practice of routines-based interviewing (part of routines-based early intervention approach) (McWilliam, 2010) had been introduced across the country and follow-up professional learning activities had followed (please see an account in section 4.2.3 of this chapter). Secondly, attention had then turned to activities supporting the adoption of coaching in practice. These were occurring in different settings and in various forms. Based on participant descriptions, it appears that MoE professional learning programming had the potential to involve ECI professionals nationally across the regions, with reliance on the practice advisory team and occasional external personnel. It was difficult to ascertain how the roll out of the coaching initiative might extend from specific geographic regions to other parts of the country, although this appeared to have occurred across time for routines-based interviewing. Evaluating such initiatives, Participant 4 said there were "blocks of training for all" then "it moves on;' which suggests at times implementation did not necessarily occur:

> But the first coaching I've seen introduced is that course I did, it didn't help me in my practice I don't think. And I've never once looked back at it [Participant 4]

It appeared those with more and less knowledge in the grand professional learning plan, had insight into the trials and pitfalls associated with wide scale initiatives. Participant 1 explained:

> these people are starting…there's awareness and then there's the early adopters and it takes all this time, tipping point and all this sort of thing it's just really frustrating knowing that you've got to wait that time, to get that… to get that ground swell, to do it well. Cause you don't want stuff to tip over either by pushing too… if you are going to be using coaching that you … almost owe it to families to do it in an evidence based way [Participant 1]

With some oversight in the overall initiative, Participant 1 acknowledged the need for care in delivery of professional learning, and the need to get the practice right as a commitment to families.

Independent provider. Participants who worked for independent providers also had professional learning occurring in their organisations, although each situation was unique. Whilst both collective and individual professional learning took place, professional learning in coaching was reported to be hard to access or available in "bits and bobs" (Participant 5). In one case, emotional coaching, a narrower coaching practice had been the focus. Participants mentioned professional learning opportunities inside and outside their provider organisations including involvement in MoE initiatives, ECI community professional learning events (such as those organised by the EIAANZ), and other external workshops. Informal professional learning, in the form of discussions were commonly reported as part of day to day field work with peer feedback and evaluation commonplace, supporting maintenance of practice. Participants working for independent providers reported close relationships between team members which offered an environment for open and frank discussion. Team meetings also provided a venue for learning, with presentations from peers another example of collaborative learning. However, one participant (reference purposely omitted) suggested at times interdisciplinary teams meant not everyone was on the same page in terms of philosophy and assessment practices, a sentiment mirrored in the data about the ECI context itself.

Specialist Teaching programme. Almost half of participants had either previously trained or were completing study through the Specialist Teaching programme (University of Canterbury and Massey University, 2016). As outlined earlier in the thesis, this blended learning environment consisted primarily of an online community through a Moodle website and was supported with twice-yearly face-to-face block courses, and supplementary distance teaching via Adobe connect, Skype, phone-calls, and email. Completion of postgraduate papers resulted in a Postgraduate Diploma in Specialist Teaching endorsed in Early Intervention. The interprofessional nature of the course was mentioned (for example by Participant 14), with collaboration encouraged between student peers and those in the wider learning community,

including lecturers, tutors, and professionals in the field. This aspect of the programme was included in the design to break down traditional ways of practising (disciplinary 'silos') in the special - inclusive education domain (Massey University, 2010).

A few participants indicated their introduction to coaching content began in the first year of the course in the papers EDST 601 Core Theory and Foundations of Specialist Teaching, and EDST 631 Theory and Foundations of Early Intervention, in the form of reading materials and a workshop entitled *Working with Families*. In the second year coaching materials were incorporated in the EDST 632 Evidence-based Interprofessional Practice in Early Intervention in a module, although the smorgasbord approach to learning advocated by the wider teaching team (to encourage student choice-making and therefore self-directed learning within the parameters of required assignment and interaction with content) meant this was engaged with by some but not all of these participants. For example, two participants referred to the fact that if coaching had not been of personal interest or a focus for an assignment, then there was a real possibility that this could be missed altogether – "You want to… like I wanted to read it but…you've got to pick" (Participant 12). Participant 4 added that compared to Specialist Teaching content, professional learning on the job was much more likely to align with everyday work with children and families. In addition, over half of those who had participated in training through this programme reported the physical field-based two school-term practicum experience to be a context for applying theory in practice with the support of field advisor, because it offered opportunities for coaching to be observed and experienced.

4.2 How Coaching was Learned

> it's all very well to say get on learn coaching and start using it but actually there's a lot …that needs to happen [Participant 3]

Participants reported that a range of professional learning mechanisms helped them to learn about coaching. A summary of many of these can be found in Table 4.1 below. Precursory learning in the second column of the table was discussed above in the section on readiness for learning (pages 77-78). Aspects of other types of learning recorded in the table will be discussed in more detail in the following sections. This upcoming material outlines the physical and psychological mechanisms that enabled participants (and their ECI professional colleagues) to learn about coaching as a practice in ECI.

Table 4.1

Summary of Professional Learning Undertaken as Reported by Participants

Participant	Precursory	Conference	Workshop		Reading	Online	Collaborative	
			External*	Internal			Formal	Informal
1	✓			✓	✓		✓	
2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
3	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	✓			✓				
5	✓			✓				✓
6	✓			✓	✓			✓
7	✓			✓				
8	✓							
9				✓	✓	✓	✓	
10	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓
11			✓			access		
12	✓		✓		✓	access		✓
13	✓		✓		✓	access		✓
14	✓		✓			access		✓
15	✓		✓			access		

*includes Specialist Teaching

4.2.1 Physical mechanisms supporting professional learning in coaching. Findings showed that professional learning was supported by a range of people, tools and resources, events, and transactional activities. This corresponded with the study's sociocultural underpinnings. Most participants discussed at least two methods of learning about coaching theoretically. A few participants had very limited experience of practical coaching, and their

learning was mostly theoretical and in earlier stages of development. The range and impact of physical learning mechanisms reported by participants will now be described.

People that supported professional learning. Data suggested the involvement of people in professional learning took on three main forms. Namely, through 1) influential outsiders with specialist knowledge (usually) in coaching; 2) personal attributes of the individual professionals themselves; and, 3) collaboratively with peers or others within or outside of the organisation.

Influential personnel. A few participants referred to influential figures in their learning including Robin McWilliam, coaching "experts" M'lisa Shelden and Dathan Rush, personnel linked to training in Aotearoa New Zealand including a coaching consultant, and practice advisors at their place of work. These identities were involved in the short-term but their impact was perceived as very significant in the participants' pathway to coaching implementation. Interestingly, some participants suggested delivery of key messages from credible personnel with coaching knowledge was a required component in professional learning. In addition, a few coach and routines-based interview mentors in the workplace were identified by name. A couple of participants similarly suggested having greater-skilled colleagues supporting their professional learning process in coaching, as in a tuakana-teina approach (Te Kete Ipurangi, 2020) would be an ideal approach to have in place, however this did not appear to have happened at the time of the study.

The individual ECI professional. Participants noted personal attributes such as curiosity, being brave, patience and persistence allowed full and ongoing engagement in the professional learning process. Participant 10 also noted learning styles were important in the uptake and delivery of new practices. Individual self-directed learning mentioned by ECI professionals most frequently involved reading and reflection. It was deemed more meaningful for individual professionals when they were able to "set [their] own goals" [Participant 14] in the professional

learning areas they wished to focus on. This occurred formally in the Specialist Teaching programme as a result of expectations around coursework, but also informally with a few other participants who reported having an interest in coaching and thus started their own learning pathway whilst working as ECI professionals in the field.

Collaborating with others. Participants indicated collaboration or "learning through each other" (Participant 14) with peers and others in the organisation, was a necessary component in the implementation of any new practice. This could occur in pairs, or small or larger groups; but to achieve this, positive relationships and overall support from management were necessary. Collaboration across agencies and organisation was also seen as helpful, but it was easier when the same messages, using a common language, were shared within and across teams and organisations, and where similar philosophies were present. Some participants indicated that at times self-directed learning alone was inadequate and they felt the need for more support from others. For example, there was a point where self-reflection was no longer enough and external feedback was needed to avoid blind spots (Participant 12). Data suggested that in the context of the workplace, feedback came in the form of communities of practice, peer supervision groups, regular team meetings, and brainstorming sessions. These environments offered feedback as well as added motivation to learn about coaching:

> So that professional learning community where there's excitement and drive, and passion and exploring what works for people, and seeing and hearing other experiences and you know being able to give some feedback to that I think that's going to be really helpful. We're also going to break off into smaller groups as well so that, particularly when we co-work, because often I'll launch into learning conversation and my colleague will be sort of sitting alongside, so we debrief at the end as well
>
> [Participant 9]

On the whole, participants were also aware that professional learning for a new practice would eventually involve incorporating it into case-related work. This end-point provided a practical opportunity to learn with peers in a more meaningful setting. Processes including individual and

collaborative trialling of the practice during home and centre visits, with reflection and trouble-shooting afterward providing opportunity for further learning about the application of coaching. In some circumstances, this had involved working with a peer in the field as explained above, but in others it occurred as part of activities in a supervision dyad or group, specific professional learning exercises, or informal meetings. For participants in Specialist Teaching training, collaborative learning was not only encouraged but an integral aspect of the programme, where inter-professional practice was seen as an overarching principle in focus.

Tools or resources that supported professional learning. A range of physical tools were found to support the professional learning in coaching of participants and their peers. These included those that were text-based as well as other resources and modalities. The tools can be classified into four categories: articles, "the book" (Shelden & Rush, 2011), online and video media, and, checklists and reminders. These categories will now be described below.

1) *Articles.* One-third of participants mentioned research articles as a valuable professional learning tool:

> the articles that were put up or sent out were always helpful and good to go back to [Participant 13]
>
> in that particular article [Participant 2]

2) *"The Book"*. Many participants, especially those working for the governmental ECI provider mentioned Shelden and Rush's - *Coaching in Early Childhood* book as a resource. Even those who had not engaged fully with the resource were aware of its existence:

> I'm very keen to read it to be honest I haven't even read that book by Shelden and Rush. I've looked at parts of it. So I can't say it's like reading and stuff even though I need to go and do that. [Participant 15]

Although this participant was aware of the book, from seeing it on a reading list in Specialist Teaching coursework and through her work for the governmental provider, she had not fully engaged with the resource, partly due to time constraints. Note, that following early exposure to

Shelden and Rush's (2011) evidence-based work, there were moves by at least one other participant to utilise this further to contribute to the learning of participants in the form of workshop content:

> I got into the Shelden and Rush stuff… and then I went off on my own… I don't even know why…and I put together a presentation and really it was an unpacking of the (holds up the EC coaching workbook) [Participant 1]

3) *Online and video media.* A few participants reported both ECI and more general video and online blogs and materials such those created by Diana Childress and colleagues from Virginia Commonwealth University (https://veipd.org/earlyintervention/ and https://www.veipd.org/main/pdf/coaching_fac_guide.pdf), David Rock, and the Harvard Business School. One participant in particular discussed how a YouTube video "really succinctly" showed "a snapshot" of coaching in action during a collaborative professional learning exercise (Participant 13). A couple of participants also mentioned the utilisation of other types of online materials but stated that engaging with these resources did not necessarily lead to implementation of coaching. Resources particular to the Specialist Teaching programme included its website and paper content, downloadable articles, PowerPoints and other written materials, and online portfolio products including self-generated writing such as plans, summaries of literature, reflections on practice, and other artefacts.
4) *Checklists and reminders.* Three participants mentioned using traditional pen and paper to either make notes or to fashion their own plan regarding home-visiting or a coaching session, whilst one other mentioned the value they placed on a small reminder or checklist.

Overall, visual and written materials were engaged with in both formal and informal learning situations to some extent, although participants in the Specialist Teaching programme were more likely to have looked at a wider range of materials and reflected in different ways.

Professional learning events that supported learning. As discussed on page 78, initial routines-based early intervention and routines-based interview events preceding professional learning in coaching occurred across 2013-2014. These included the visit and seminars by Robin McWilliam hosted by the MoE around the country and later routines-based interview trainings that occurred regionally and in districts. Aside from these routines-based interview events, a number of other organised events which had coaching as a focus, were discussed by participants. These included an overseas conference, specialised training with an external coach as part of leadership training, and in-house coaching workshops held in both North and South island locations with follow-up to be run by a coaching specialist in at least one case. Participants involved in Specialist Teaching early intervention teacher training were exposed to some of the above events, but also experienced online tutorials and face-to-face workshops in two locations in February and July 2016. Other training events related to coaching which were mentioned by participants included sessions about: family-centred practice (Participant 5); emotional coaching (Participant 6); and occupational performance coaching with Fiona Graham, a locally based occupational therapy researcher in ECI (Participant 14).

Workshops. The majority of specifically designed coaching workshops mentioned were those developed within the MoE, or in Specialist Teaching. The material in the MoE-delivered workshops aligned closely with the EC coaching handbook materials of Shelden and Rush. A summary of the main aspects of the EC coaching resource were presented in an initial workshop, with subsequent learning occurring in group work which followed this event. Participant's accounts mention group work in two different regions afterward. In one group in X region, notes were taken chapter by chapter and shared amongst ECI professionals. In another, learning was followed up in a range of different ways. For example, participants described how forming a professional learning group following the workshop allowed this group to receive a copy of the book. The group then met periodically once a month for up to six months to look at aspects of

the book. Those participants who had engaged with the book on their own were understandably conscious of the EC coaching model.

Perceived v*alue of professional learning events.* Reported professional learning events were variously evaluated by some participants. A few participants seemed to value the professional learning events:

> also the occupational performance coaching that I've now since been to with…. I would have paid zillions to listen to her for the whole day [Participant 14]

Other comments suggested participants were more careful in their evaluation. For example, some concern was raised by one participant about the value of professional learning if it was not adequately customised for ECI. In particular, data suggested that in many cases, content and activities to support ECI professionals' knowledge of 'how to' coach in practice in ECI settings in the organised events was limited. Participant 4, for example, described an introduction to coaching workshop she attended which involved group work, hands on activities and games but did not quite hit the mark – although it seemed like it could apply "personally" and was "feel good" it "didn't apply to work" (Participant 4)

> we could see how we *could* use it but we were thinking *how do* we use this?" [Participant 4]

In other words, the participant saw the future potential uses of the coaching that had been explained to them, but the first steps of applying coaching in practice seemed to be more difficult. The participant went on to describe how this workshop content was quickly forgotten, and that when asked to speak in a meeting "six months later", neither she nor a colleague who had also attended were able to share any real information about it. She reported this perspective was also held by the experienced colleague, implying this situation had little to do with her being a new ECI professional with limited practice–based knowledge to connect the new coaching ideas to.

Transactional activities that supported professional learning. A number of specific learning transactions between the ECI professional and people, tools, and events were described by participants. The most commonly discussed transactions will now be outlined.

Firstly, participants participated in workshops and conferences and in doing so "listened" to the human instruments of professional learning – the coaching experts. As well as attending workshops, some participants had been involved in developing and delivering workshop content. For example:

> It was through doing that workshop that I learnt what makes up a coaching conversation and the theory behind it (Participant 1)

This type of transaction involved learning about coaching theory and then sharing it collaboratively with support tools such as PowerPoint slides, in a formal setting. Explaining coaching to others appeared to enhance these participants' knowledge of the practice.

Secondly, in engaging with written sources, participants talked about reading, notetaking ("I kind of just put some notes on them" (Participant 12)), summarising, and reflecting. There was acknowledgement that reading and reflection worked hand in hand. For example it was stated that "being able to come away and process the articles" (Participant 12) was important. Participants were also able to re-cap materials they had read, for example, Participant 12, shared:

> it was talking about yourself and who you are and the way you relate to other people and that's something that really interests me and so I was thinking about that a lot… because obviously I've not done any early intervention stuff so I was going into families fresh and I had been thinking about … my body language… and how I come across to people [Participant 12]

In line with this, storing and maintaining future access to reading materials, and retaining new theoretical ideas was noted to be important by a handful of participants. For example **"**I save all the articles in pdf onto my iPad" (Participant 15). This gives evidence that they may have intended to revisit the material at a later date.

Thirdly, coaching transactions between ECI professionals and other people were reported in three main forms. These were observing effective coaching, which included being coached, and actually doing coaching. These three transactional activities will now be described.

Observing coaching. Participants involved in ST training in particular reported the helpfulness of 'observing', 'watching', and 'noticing' colleagues (early intervention teachers and other disciplines) and practicum field advisors coaching (e.g. Participants 11, 12, 13, 14, 15). A couple also mentioned watching videos of coaching online or within workshops. Numerous examples of observing were shared by participants:

> I've learnt too through observing my colleagues [Participant 14]
>
> It's actually being out with people and watching them in action. That's what gave me the opportunity and took away the scariness… yeah seeing it in action by a skilled professional really makes all the difference [Participant 15]
>
> watching them in their visits and noting how they were wording some of their questions and how they were discussing…when they spoke to teachers or the centre director…the education support worker if there was one involved [Participant 14]
>
> watching how they interact with families a lot more deeply than what I was [Participant 11]
>
> she was just kind of like what made you think that and he kind of went into it [Participant 12]

As well as the participants having the necessary background knowledge to identify the coaching components being used, having the opportunity to watch a ECI professional who held practical coaching know-how was also deemed as important. Participant 12 explained this in the following way:

> noticing my field adviser, she really tried to step back and really empower the parents all the time. She was brilliant [Participant 12]

Two further comments gave detail on how valuable observation of a skilled ECI professional was. One, from watching the same professional work with a family:

> I think my … field adviser was probably a very good role model of… good practice of coaching…we were at an interview… meeting for a family… all the teachers, the dad, me, speech language therapist… And she just very calmly said…. what made you think of that idea? so neutral in her tone like in her language … there was no judgement it was beautiful to watch and I imagine that would be… good coaching
> [Participant 12]

And second, when she entered into a discussion with a peer:

> I even saw her do it like in an argument with like another speech language therapist. They disagreed but … she was like using coaching techniques for the argument. … obviously it's a skill you could use …with anybody to have an open conversation
> [Participant 12]

Seeing the coaching strategy of questioning become part of an everyday conversation as a powerful communication tool, allowed the participant to see the scope for its use in a range of situations. Although observing coaching played a key role in participants' learning how to coach, Participant 15 pointed out that the opportunity to extend this could have been better organised, by their field advisor switching roles and observing them "but she didn't actually observe any of mine …" (Participant 15).

Being coached. A few participants (for example, Participants 1, 11, 12, and 13) talked about how they learned more about coaching from their experiences of "being" coached. This occurred in two main ways. Firstly, within peer or professional groups:

> I'm finding that because of the coaching I received in EI myself, that problem solving as a group… it's going across all areas (Participant 11)

and secondly, in EC centres, where participants were either practicum students, or in their own centres in their everyday individual roles with itinerant ECI professionals visiting and utilising a coaching approach:

> Yep, yeah, yeah I think they were using coaching definitely…for us. It was really interesting to be on the receiving end really fascinating…so like for this child they said… like what are you doing for your plan and so we told them what we're doing for the plan and they're like okay sounds good. So being on the receiving end… [Participant 12]

> so I could see that my teacher didn't get it at all but I could also see what they were doing [Participant 12]

Needless to say, exposure to the idea of coaching beforehand allowed participants to identify when it was occurring, whilst taking part in the process.

Doing coaching. Participants had had a variety of experiences of putting coaching into practice, although some of this was quite minimal. Some had utilised a coaching approach in their work with parents e.g. "working in the centre I've already been working with some parents and been utilising… a coaching approach" [Participant 13]. Others had practised coaching in a leadership or management situation, or with peers in hypothetical professional learning activities such as role plays. Please see Table 4.2 as an outline of how coaching had occurred.

Table 4.2

How Coaching had been Trialled by Participants

Manner in which coaching was trialled in practice	Number of Participants
With families or educators in ECI work	6
In non-field based ECI role	1
In current ECE work	2
In role play or professional learning exercise	3
Not applied in practice	3

Although roleplays and role reversal can be a source of discomfort for some, participants reported they served well for practising a new skill:

> I'm not always a big fan of role plays but for some reason with coaching that worked quite well … Z was in a role play and I thought yeah she's got it down pat [Participant 13]

As outlined in the above excerpt, role-plays offered the opportunity to take on different perspectives.

4.2.2 Psychological mechanisms that occurred as part of professional learning. Two-thirds of participants described the individual psychological processes which took place whilst they were learning about coaching and applying it in practice. In no particular order, they discussed *knowing, inquiring, learning, thinking, reflecting, gaining awareness, making sense, evaluating,* and *unlearning* of older ways of thinking. Participants differentiated between each of these processes. This was evidenced by the use of two or three of the terms in relation to each other within one sentence. For example: 'thinking', 'realising' and 'knowing' [Participant 11].

While 'knowing' referred to the individual holding knowledge or information about something at a cognitive level – "like I know that's what it is" [Participant 12] and "I do know more than I think I do" [Participant 13]; and, 'inquiring' concerned the exploration or seeking information part of learning; 'learning' itself was considered by participants to be the process of acquiring or taking on this new knowledge about coaching:

> that's another thing I am learning about [Participant 1]

> I'd just been learning about coaching and after the meeting I thought to myself I… should be coaching [Participant 13]

The word 'thinking' was used frequently by participants, especially in relation to thinking about coaching, thinking as part of the learning process, or in the case of the routines-based interview (to be described in the next section) the shift in thinking that occurred. For example:

> I thought I did. But I don't think I did. I think I had an idea of it and I'd heard about coaching in other situations so I kind of… Yeah it's really hard to know if I did or not… [Participant 1]
>
> I remember that's what I thought [Participant 12]
>
> I didn't think I'd learn anything because I thought I was really good *(both laughing)* basically and then that was kind of that changed in a hell of a hurry [Participant 11]

Similarly, reflection was said to be important for enhancing practice, and could occur in the moment, or later after the fact "looking back" [Participant 14]. The 'process of reflecting' and 'act of reflection' were both discussed by participants, with findings suggesting they are carried out both individually and in collaboration with colleagues. The parallel process of facilitating the reflection of parents and educators within the coaching process was also mentioned. Reflecting was talked about in relation to the processing of theoretical ideas, with participants whose learning pathway was more practically focused also identifying its importance in the learning process.

Being or becoming 'aware' was another psychological mechanism found. This was represented by the ideas of seeing and noticing, awareness and mindfulness, and insight and realisation. Participants talked about seeing in the physical sense, but also in the broader sense in relation to aspects of their work, for example:

> so I could see that my teacher didn't get it at all [Participant 12]
>
> I can see that coaching helps me to build a professional relationship [Participant 3]

A few ECI professionals also noted their enhanced ability to notice what they were doing in the moment:

> you're wanting on the tip of your tongue to give advice [Participant 5]
>
> I sometimes notice that I'll be asking a question [Participant 2]

> You hear yourself sometimes [Participant 10]

One-third of participants made reference to the idea of '*mindfulness'*, or being aware of one's own thoughts, feelings, senses, and environment in the present moment.

> I was kind of like overly mindful…like worrying about every little detail… I had been thinking about like, my body language, a lot and how I come across to people [Participant 12]

Just a couple of participants referred directly to the idea of '*awareness*', with Participant 13 in particular discussing it as an increasing or measurable phenomenon – for example "becoming (more, a lot more, quite, very much) aware" (Participant 13).

The events or processed by which participants gained *insight* or *made realisations* were also mentioned. Here the use of video feedback as a way of gaining insight is discussed:

> So for example if you were a person like that and you went off and gave it a go and you were filmed and you were bought back, that might be the first time you get to explore that you are. Cause people, I don't think, nobody intentionally says I've got the power. They almost want to be… to not be like that. But it might be an opportunity to really get insight into that, and that's why it has to be done really well...and safely. [Participant 1]

The need for insight was seen by this participant as an important requirement in the professional learning process. She stated that one "can have experience and good intentions but [ECI professionals] need to gain insight" (Participant 1).

Similarly, although more frequently mentioned (by six participants), was the mechanism of '*realising'*: For example:

> I didn't actually realise that it was to help the family to be able to implement those strategies themselves [Participant 11]

Two participants talked about realising as an event rather than a process (a noun rather than a verb), for example Participant 13 mentioned "a bit of a lightbulb moment" whilst Participant 1 described 'realisation' as an event that occurred from "from reading material, reflecting, and just listening and probably with other stuff that's going on in EI as well, not just through this

[professional learning]" (Participant 1). An example of realising as a more gradual process (or verb) also follows here – "probably wasn't until later that you realised how strongly all those elements came together" (Participant 13).

Reference to '*making sense of*' coaching was not common in the data, as it was mentioned by two participants only. However, where there was reference, sense-making was seen as making connections between ideas:

> it was kind of learning what coaching isn't, and then kind of marrying it with what I was learning that it was …..
>
> it was just like okay let me connect this with something wider [Participant 13]

or in relation to the act of reflecting:

> so when I read this article it was... in hindsight and I was like oh that makes a lot of sense as to why she did things [Participant 12]

It is likely however, that participants made sense of coaching and its practice in the wider context through all psychological mechanisms mentioned in this section.

As interviews progressed, participants' '*evaluating*' of the professional learning process itself was evident, so much so that an interview question was changed to ask directly what they thought could work in a professional learning programme in coaching. In particular, statements such as the following were made:

> but the people who probably see themselves along the continuum [of change toward coaching], are probably not as far along the continuum as they think… but that's a start…
>
> [Participant 1]

Although evaluation occurred in relation to own practice, for example, Participant 2 suggested she had "come to the conclusion" that her practice had "shift[ed] quite a lot"; a number of occurrences of 'evaluating-type' processing were in relation to other professional's practice.

Finally, the concept of unlearning was present in the data although more so implicitly than explicitly. For example, only one participant openly stated how she let go of assumptions and preconceptions about coaching as a practice as part of professional learning - "how have I changed, it's my pre-conceived ideas probably have changed more" [Participant 11]. However, the psychological mechanism of unlearning was implicitly present throughout the data, in discussions looking back at historical and traditional ECI practices and the trialling of and change toward different and new ones, such as the routines-based interview and coaching.

4.2.3 Professional learning in routines-based early intervention and routines-based interviewing as a learning mechanism. To better facilitate change in behaviour, practice or pedagogy, professional learning sometimes involves exposure exercises where aspects of the new approach are introduced (for example, language, theoretical ideas, or practical aspects) (e.g. Childers, Cole, Lyons, & Turley, 2016; Smith & Worsfold, 2015). Although it is unclear if the introduction of the routines-based early intervention approach and routines-based interview tool was formally planned as an exposure exercise to support ECI professionals toward working in a new facilitative and collaborative paradigm, findings strongly suggest professional learning in the practices were mechanistic in enhancing participants' overall understanding of coaching.

The idea of ecologically sound intervention embedded in everyday routines is not new (Mahoney et al., 1999). However, informed by theoretical and empirical evidence in family-centred practice, family systems, ecological assessment and intervention in natural environments, transdisciplinary teaming, and home-visiting, McWilliam's routines-based early intervention (McWilliam, 2010) offers ECI professionals a different conceptual model for providing ECI in the child's natural environments. Routines-based early intervention aligns with a primary service provision perspective and consists of a number of different components and practice tools

including ecomaps, individual family service plans, the routines-based interview, and collaborative consultation (also known as coaching).

Here, one participant describes the different aspects of the routines-based early intervention approach, including the routines-based interview, and its relationship with the work of Shelden & Rush, key authors in EC coaching literature:

> So RBEI…Routines-based early intervention… it's Robin McWilliam, but it's not just him, okay so it's made up of the ecomap, and then it's got the RBI, the routines-based interview, which determines the family priorities and functional goals, and then there's the PSP the primary service provider model where you've got practitioner…and so this is where you'd have a coaching relationship, that's the lead worker, that's the family that's the child. And then he talks about collaborative consultation …it's coaching and I think he knows now that he probably should have called it coaching … because with the coaching literature, it's very clear that consultation is quite different… and by calling this collaborative consultation there a bit...it's a bit confusing …So collaborative consultation to EC, and then effective home-visits. So really that's pretty self- explanatory. That's his. The RBI is his, PSP is universal, but this stuff the collaborative consultation in ECE and effective Home visits is really the adults, so it's really, to work effectively in early childhood and home, both of those are coaching..... he's got the rules of engagement if you like for these. This is where the Shelden and Rush has a lot more depth for..... So that's how… so it was when I was learning about the model and I was looking about how to get this part right that I got into the Shelden and Rush stuff so that's where it came from. [Participant 1]

This excerpt provides valuable insight into the most important components of the routines-based early intervention approach, including coaching (collaborative consultation).

The role of the routines-based interview. The routines-based interview became a focus in both governmental and nongovernmental ECI communities after McWilliam of the Siskin Institute visited and presented to many ECI professionals in Aotearoa New Zealand in 2012 (Participant 2). The functional assessment tool utilises semi-structured interviewing techniques to build a relationship with the family, uncover family priorities and develop a set of family goals aiding the child's participation in routine daily activities, and evaluate family functioning and child development (McWilliam, Casey, & Sims, 2009). When combined with collaborative

consultation or coaching the routines-based interview's worth is increased, as there can be ongoing review of progress toward identified goals and adjustment of strategies in attaining these goals.

> the sooner you train people in actually doing that interview and the sooner you generate the family priorities and make them into functional goals, the other practices fall out of it. So you need to get that right and then you use the coaching relationship, to support the family with those goals. [Participant 1]

Here, Participant 1 outlines how the routines-based interview and coaching work together.

Professional learning in routines-based early intervention and the routines-based interview. Although no interview questions asked about the approach or its components directly, all but two of the 15 participants spoke about either routines-based early intervention or the routines-based interview, or both. Of the 12 participants currently working in ECI settings, all reported taking part in professional learning in routines-based early intervention and the routines-based interview in particular, and spoke openly about it as a transition in practice approach. This provides strong evidence of the value participants placed on this. As mentioned above, data confirmed both governmental and independent ECI providers had exposure to the routines-based interview, and therefore routines-based early intervention. Those that discussed the routines-based interview almost always mentioned the training that had occurred around this interviewing practice, as well as any tools and resources that had been used to support their learning:

> I'm doing the RBI training through work [Participant 4]

> I do see a shift when people are doing the RBI training when they do the role-plays. …they get the chance to be a parent, the observer or interviewer. And quite a few of them find that when they're doing the parent role and the person playing the role of the interviewer starts suggesting things in the middle of the interview, they feel really uncomfortable and they give that feedback at the end [Participant 2]

> Well, so we've had a number of our own in-house RBEI workshop development days, cause you know I mean it's pretty much up to us how we apply and trying to make sure, and partly cause we're trying to make sure we're consistently using it, and putting out the same messages throughout the team as much as possible. Like we might do it

> slightly different of course. Everyone's got their own style – but we're essentially doing the same thing. And talking through and trouble-shooting where we find things aren't working so well or we're not sure or we're wondering about other ideas [Participant 8]

It was not noted that all 12 participants learned about routines-based early intervention and routines-based interview, although the accounts that were shared suggested it had been read about, discussed and hypothetically tested in professional learning workshops and subsequently trialled in real practice.

Understandings about routines-based early intervention and the routines-based interview. Participants discussed characteristics of the routines-based early intervention approach and the routines-based interview, and its links with other practices (e.g. Participant 2). For example, participants noted how it had helped them to put family priorities first (becoming more family-centred) and to step back, giving space for parents and educators to problem solve:

> getting parents to identify what they want to work on … the whole mentality around that has been a huge shift. … I don't have to go in and assess this kid within an inch of its life, and there was always that thing where we, we, um, um, did developmental assessment, AEPS – out the window, Carolina - out the window. It has huge implications for a lot of those developmental assessments. Cause why are you finding out. Cause we're not diagnosing…by going through this interview parents come up with the most amazing things. Kind of sit back and look at their whole day and look at how their child goes throughout the day you know. That you almost trust the process and at the end of it you get really, really relevant stuff [Participant 1]

There appeared to be an underlying understanding of the direct link between routines-based interview and coaching, which may be why almost all participants voluntarily discussed the interview in the first place.

> I guess I'm finding it a little bit hard to separate… separate coaching from the whole RBEI at this point only because I guess that's how for us this has kind of come into context of you know… as that whole sort of package [Participant 7]

In particular, participants saw professional learning and subsequent use of routines-based interview as a turning point, a stepping stone toward or the impetus for their development of coaching. Half went on to specifically refer to coaching as a means for something else to happen, instrumental in a wider shift or change.

> I think the momentum for us to really start changing a lot of things was when the Robert McWilliams [sic] sort of work started coming in with the routine based interventions. And I think that was the start of the turning point for us, of um particularly looking at the interviews, and not, you know it was very much going through the day and finding out where the issues are and not immediately jumping in and problem solving them, which for lots of us is very, very hard cause you can see the easy solution there, right there [Participant 5]

> I did some work on Robin McWilliam and … that would have been to be honest the first time I started looking at it in that way through his work [Participant 4]

> Well the RBI was huge because that has, that's just all about coaching …it's just constant messages about bolstering supports and you know not being the experts, that it's a team approach. You know, it's the way we approach our visits, set them up, explain our intention again…so that when we get there everybody doesn't desert us and we're left…hmm with the child. It's just constant, constant messages to those professionals about why we're there [Participant 9]

Challenges of the routines-based interview. Some participants also discussed the challenges and constraints of the routines-based interview. These included:

it's cultural applicability in terms of pace and the naturalness of relationship building [Participant 8],

logistical considerations, such as the time it takes to carry out,

> And I haven't been to the last… yeah how does it fit. The theory is great, but how do you put that into practice. And the interview also takes like two hours and how do you fit that in amongst everything else. So there are logistical problems with it [Participant 6]

a lack of acceptance by health professions because it did not fit with a medical model,

> It's easier for staff at the ministry because there's only two disciplines involved and they're both from an educational kind of, developmental perspective rather than a medical model [Participant 6]

parental expectations of, and engagement with, the new tool

> you're really building *belief* (*with emphasis*)…in people that they're the right… they are the experts…historically the people like to think that somebody else is going to come in and fix the problem and it can be quite unsettling to know that nobody's going to do that. Especially in EI where parents are still at that stage. [Participant 1]

> It's still the perception out there that you're going to work with my child and I'm going to sit over there [Participant 10]

> I don't mind people telling me what to do if I know why… We need buy in from the family… 'what about if I explained the purpose to the parents and they still said no?'…In coming in, it's still a very collaborative process [Participant 1]

the risk that such an approach might never give space for the child needs to be discussed and they may therefore go unseen. As one participant pointed out, a danger could be that priority issues for family survival such as employment, nutrition, working within the law, could eventually become pervasive - where "there isn't any other thing" in focus [Participant 8]

the perception /suspicion that routines-based interview was the next new thing or a passing phase

> I feel like I'm being on the bandwagon about RBI [Participant 4]

> actually at first I thought "what the devil"…I wasn't going "woah"… but I love new things. I love to learn so I'm not closed but I thought "oh". And then I thought you know and that coaching element is there… [Participant 10]

Steps to implementation. Participant data suggested further work was required for implementation of both the routines-based interview and coaching, and that the professional learning needs of ECI professionals were diverse.

> I think we were trying to get our head all around that change to the sort of RBI and that and then moving towards the coaching so… So at this stage for us, I feel we've only um… we've only started to kind of touch on this [Participant 7]

> So yeah, where are we at? I think there's an acknowledgement… that there's a shift to make, and we're all just working on it individually at a different pace and in different areas [Participant 2]

Key findings of this chapter will now be discussed in relation to relevant research. For clarity, this discussion will be organised using the same foci and similar headings as those of the findings.

4.3 Discussion of Findings about How ECI Professionals are Learning about Coaching

4.3.1 Discussion about readiness for professional learning. An initial main finding of the study concerned participants' readiness for professional learning in coaching. As well as the impact of cultural, social, and institutional contextual factors when a new tool or practice is introduced into the workplace (Lanzara, 2016), those pertaining to the individual are also influential. For example, readiness for self-directed learning has been discussed in health professional and adult education settings in terms of "attitudes, values, and abilities" Lai (2011, p. 99), personal and professional socialisation, and the professional's learning disposition; but, also mentions the presence of environmental supports such as appropriate learning technologies and access (Chu & Tsai, 2009; Lai, 2011; Premkumar et al., 2018; Slater et al., 2017). The current 'readiness for professional learning in coaching' findings interconnect with Knowles' andragogical principles, as discussed on page 12 of the Literature Review (Knowles et al., 2015). In this study, the five identified factors contributing to readiness for PL in coaching showed many participants were at least partly 'ready' for PL in coaching, although some of these areas were more heavily weighted than others. Discussion around the five areas follows.

1. In terms of readiness relating to professional background, all participants in the current study were suitably experienced and qualified for their roles, including those who were not purely EC and ECI trained, but held qualifications and registration appropriate for their background and current professional roles. This resonates with the findings of Slater et al. (2017) who found age and level of professional qualifications were important to learning readiness in the health disciplines; which is likely to relate to the length of time spent in a profession and the accumulation of life experiences. Given the increasing rates of registration and qualification of EC educators in Aotearoa New Zealand over the past two decades (Education Counts, 2019), and local expectation for early intervention teachers to be degree-qualified in EC teaching, hold a postgraduate qualification in early intervention, and have a "minimum of three years teaching experience and a deep knowledge of child development, learning and behaviour" (Education Gazette, 2020), the current finding regarding professional qualifications was unsurprising from a practice perspective. Specifically, there are professional expectations in place regarding qualifications, and previous training and experience of new practice adoption meant ECI professionals had knowledge about the professional learning process and what it involved. Furthermore, all participants had at least two qualifications as well as a number of years of practice based experience, therefore it is likely all were well-placed to take on new professional learning. Moreover, as outlined in the Literature Review on page 41, ECI professionals are expected to engage in regular professional learning according to the EC curriculum - Te Whāriki, and Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand and EIAANZ ethical codes (EIAANZ, 2019; MoE, 2017; Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2020).

Although professional knowledge and competence was clear, few participants were able to pinpoint coaching-specific professional learning in their disciplinary training when it had occurred prior to the Specialist Teaching programme. This could be explained by coaching being relatively new in ECI settings. However, given that coaching has been part of professional

supervision and practice implementation since the 1990s (at least in the United States) (Gallacher, 1995; 1997), this is not entirely accurate. Instead, one could consider its application when working with families and educators as more recent, especially in the local Aotearoa New Zealand. Regardless, the reported lack of coaching content in ECI professional training prior to the most current formal professional preparation programme was evident, which probably fits with the evolution of coaching in the educational context overall (Fletcher & Mullen, 2012). This highlights the disconnect between the expected use of a coaching approach as outlined in the Early Intervention Practice Framework, and the relative lack of professional learning opportunities in place.

Many ECI professionals had experienced coaching or coaching strategies through their participation in professional learning for formal and / or evidence-based ECI programmes. However, not all recognised this as coaching, or to be strategies associated with the practice. Rather, this was a retrospective thought or report of similar or related practices after taking on new knowledge in coaching. Where coaching had been explicitly mentioned in a programme or approach, for example in Incredible Years' peer coaching where it is incorporated as a delivery mode (The Incredible Years, 2019), and in Triple P where trainees receive "coaching and feedback on their performance" as they learn (Triple P, 2019), participants were able to identify the coaching component.

2. The relevance of coaching in ECI settings in Aotearoa New Zealand was discussed by some participants in relation to literature and governmental documentation. As evidenced earlier in the thesis (pages 1-2 of the Introduction and pages 25-29 of the Literature Review), enough theoretical and empirical data exists to suggest coaching is a practice of interest in ECI. In this study, a couple of authors who confirm theoretical backing for coaching were mentioned, for example Dunst (Dunst & Trivette, 1996) and McWilliam (2010). However, only a few

participants discussed empirical sources which supported the practice. Examples included Shelden and Rush's (2011) literature review, and material from allied health disciplines (e.g. occupational performance coaching (Graham, 2010; Graham, Rodger, & Ziviani, 2013; Graham et al., 2018)). Empirical studies in coaching are limited, however participants did not appear aware of the available research that does exist. This means ECI professionals may have been exposed to the research literature narrowly, or not at all, a concern when the uptake of evidence-based practices should be a focus (Odom, 2009; Odom & Wolery, 2003). This could suggest only some professionals undertake independent individual professional learning and are instead relying on management or practice guides for written sources of practice information.

Although coaching is recommended in the Early Intervention Practice Framework (MoE, 2011a), Keilty (2013) states ECI professionals need to see "the conceptual link between endorsed practices and their work" so that the uptake of new practices is straightforward, and that the responsibility for this "lies with professional development providers and early intervention systems" (Keilty, 2013, p. 37). This extends to understanding the alignment between the practice, and policies and standards (Desimone, 2011). This conceptual link did not appear to resonate with participants. The relationship between coaching and current legislation, policy and curriculum initiatives was not the first thing that came to mind for participants, with just one or two specifically discussing governmental documents. For example, while the notion of partnerships and equitable opportunities for all begins in the Treaty of Waitangi, partnership was only discussed generally by a few participants and only two identified that the Treaty has links to coaching. Given that the researcher asked participants directly *how coaching relates to the ECI context in Aotearoa New Zealand*, it was surprising that participants were not able to share more information in this area. Only a few ECI professionals showed awareness of the policy and practice guidelines that underpin their ECI practice e.g. Success for All (Beehive.govt.nz, 2010; MoE, 2014), the Early Intervention Practice Framework (MoE, 2011a), and Specialist Service

Standards (MoE, 2013), and they were only able to explain how these linked to coaching in a limited way. Instead there was a better sense of the overall direction of their organisation (for example, page 79) with underlying and implicit concepts from contributing cross sector documents guiding ECI practice – such as, independence and empowerment from the New Zealand Disability Strategy (Office for Disability Issues, 2016), capability building from Whānau Ora (New Zealand Taskforce on Whānau-centred Initiatives, 2010), and collaborative practices from Collaboration for Success (MoE, 2011c).

In relation to organisational directives, a further potential conflict in the data appeared to be present. Participants perceived the launching of the routines-based early intervention approach and the routines-based interview (see further detail in this chapter in Section 4.2.3) to be part of a wider top-down directive from the main governmental ECI provider. This is probably because of the role of the MoE in offering professional learning for both governmental and non-governmental providers. However, most participants appeared sure coaching was not a top-down management directive, even though they saw the introduction of a coaching approach, and routines-based early intervention and the routines-based interview, to be interlinked. Furthermore, those who perceived professional learning in coaching to be due to a bottom-up professional interest only, may have overlooked evidence which suggested an underlying political undercurrent supporting self-determination and empowerment of families and day to day educators, may have been present.

In support of this socio-political direction it is noted that data collection for this study occurred between September 2014 and Dec 2016. At this time the government's National party-led coalition had remained largely unchanged for three terms, and a set of neo-liberal objectives was well-established with moves towards corporatisation and privatisation evident, influencing the public sector. The history of coaching, with its inception in the corporate and executive world,

meant it was well fitted with these processes. However, alongside this there was also an impression by experienced ECI professionals that coaching was just another passing fad. This attitude suggested ECI had undergone series of policy and practice changes based on different governmental philosophical standing and funding, across the years.

Some participants concluded that limitations in current practice meant there was a need to use coaching with families and educators. Professional insight showed a coaching approach was relevant to engagement with families and EC educators, and could ensure families' involvement and empowerment in their child's supported learning pathway in line with family-centred practice principles, even in the face of historical disempowerment when working with governmental services. This fits with literature which highlights the potential benefits of coaching in supporting engagement with adults in the ECI team and breaking down imbalances in professional – family / educator, and even institutional power (Keilty, 2017; Lea, 2006).

Although limited data in the effectiveness of coaching in ECI exists in terms of child and family outcomes, facilitative coaching is well set to empower families, and support the embedding of intervention into everyday routines and activities, thus promoting inclusion and participation at home, EC centres and in the community (Shelden & Rush, 2010; Salisbury et al., 2010). This also supports principles of the Early Intervention Practice Framework (MoE, 2011a) specifically family-centred practices and natural learning environments. ECI professionals were able to identify the relevance of coaching to these issues in the field, and could see possibilities for the new practice as a solution. This indicated participants had a degree of awareness about their practice. This awareness may have come about through some form of reflective thinking through early exposure to coaching information, and 'reflection on practice' (Schön, 1987).

3. Literature suggests concepts of inquisitiveness, creativity, openness, and ability to cope with risk and unsettledness associated with change (Horstmeyer, 2019; Merck KGaA-EMD

Group, 2016) influence a learners' attention to stay engaged in a tertiary programme, particularly in an online setting (for example, Jeffrey, Milne, Suddaby, & Higgins, 2012). In this study, motivation to learn about coaching in ECI was represented as either a natural disposition to learning, or, a state positivity of particular participants. This finding is likely associated with maturity and professional experience level as discussed earlier (Slater et al., 2017). However, of all the components relating to professionals' readiness for professional learning in this study, professional interest and motivation to learn about coaching was shown to be less emphasised, with only small amounts of data present. This lack of data suggests participants did not have a strong interest or motivation to learn about coaching, perhaps because of a relative lack of knowledge about the practice, or alternatively, because this was another new practice to learn in addition to other practices such as the routines-based interview.

In the current study, motivation to learn about coaching appeared to not only be linked to intrinsic factors but to the perceived needs of those adults supporting the child's learning and participation everyday (see section 2. above). ECI professionals had knowledge of how current practice was not working, and appeared conscious of what coaching could offer. This relates to motivation to learn based on meaningful-ness (Jeffrey et al., 2012). Further, meaning for learning was found where coaching was recommended in the Early Intervention Practice Framework, and professional learning activities that ensued were responding to this need albeit implicitly and indirectly. Supporting these notions, adult learning is considered to be principally orientated to real life problems or issues (see Knowles' et al. (2015) discussed earlier). Of note, motivation to learn due to internal "interest in the subject or its professional application" is more likely to engage in "deep learning", whilst that which is motivated by external reasons is more likely to be associated with "surface learning" (Premkumar et al., 2018, p. 7). In light of this it appears where internal motivation based on intrinsic characteristics was low, seeing a reason for coaching

from others' perspectives was just as influential in ECI professionals' interest to learn about the practice.

Workplace learning literature suggests adults' reasons for carrying out individual workplace learning can be categorised into three main areas. Employee learning projects may be *induced* when "an imbalance between the expected job performance and the employee's capabilities to meet those expectations" exists; (Clardy, 2000, p. 114); *voluntary,* where "the individual's perception of the opportunities or constraints at work" and their "strong personal motivation to act and to learn" (Clardy, 2000, p. 115). Induced learning is likely to have a goal shared by the organisation, whilst voluntary projects may be about either the employee or organisational interests. *Synergistic*, a mixture of the two above-mentioned motivations concerns "the combination of a motivation to act and learn with the spark of workplace circumstance" (Clardy, 2000, p. 116). Taking these data into account, the current study showed motivation and interest in coaching to also be synergistic with indication there was both a need for ECI professionals to learn a new collaborative approach from an organisational and ECI field-based perspective; and, individual ECI professionals looking at new practices to address their own observations about family and educator engagement, parent-professional and educator-professional partnerships, and a perceived failure in family-centred approaches. From this perspective, although there were limited data discussing personal motivation to learn about coaching in the current study, from a workplace and professional perspective, drivers for professional learning in coaching were present.

4. Prior to professional learning, many ECI professionals had little or no idea what coaching was, whilst those that did most frequently related the practice to sport. Given that the term is used every day in the sporting context, this makes a good deal of sense. In addition, although the participants may not have been aware, coaching has been informed across sectors

by the work of Gallwey and Whitmore involved in high performance sports such as golf, tennis and motor racing (Bachkirova et al, 2014; Brock, 2010, 2014; Wildflower, 2013). Whitmore for instance developed the principles of the GROW model, mentioned elsewhere in this thesis (Whitmore, 2009). Therefore, the links are more than terminological. The issue is that sport coaching discussed by participants was predominantly seen as instructional, where the 'coach' was the expert who 'gave orders' and had 'the power to be heard' by players. This was likely based on participants' own experiences. However, it should be mentioned, currently, sport coaching is not only based on principles of performance but is more likely to incorporate individual self-improvement (Kidman & Lombardo, 2010).

At this early stage, some participants perceived the interactional practices they currently used, were coaching. Whilst some of the strategies in use may have aligned with those utilised in coaching, others that were described were directive in nature, or were similar to instructional coaching from an expert perspective described in some ECI and EC literature (Coogle, Rahn, Ottley, & Storie, 2016; Hnasko, 2017; Kemp & Turnbull, 2014). However, this differs from coaching discussed in general coaching literature where the coach works as a non-expert, naïve inquirer or "explorer" (Bachkirova et al., 2015, p. 448) – asking questions from a 'not knowing' position, which allows the coachee to be fully empowered to problem solve and innovate. Therefore, prior to professional learning, participants retrospectively described an alternative coaching construct, which at the time they believed to be up to date.

The identification of life and therapeutic coaching by a few participants showed their understanding of the scope of the practice. The practice may be considered 'new' in Aotearoa New Zealand, but globally, particularly in Europe and the United States, coaching has been evident in a variety of disciplines for some time. The five-year window in which coaching has become popular as participants mentioned, is more accurate, as empirical data proving the

efficacy and effectiveness of health coaching and in cognate sciences to support psychological wellbeing is a more recent emergence. Although content and literature in life coaching exists, it remains an under-researched practice overall. The discrepancy in generation of empirical data between disciplines utilising coaching is of interest here, as it appears that fields that are more scientific in background, and that need to justify public funding are more likely to undertake research programmes, whilst those working on private and individual payment are less likely to generate an evidence base.

5. Participants identified a wider shift in ECI practice as an environmental factor which supported their readiness for learning about coaching. This finding aligns with ECI literature which has referred to shifts in practices and approaches across nearly two decades. Shifts that have been discussed include changes from direct to indirect itinerant service delivery (Dinnebeil, Pretti-Frontczak, & McInerney, 2009); consultative to collaborative practices (Alliston, 2007; Buysse & Wesley, 2001; Fraser, Moltzen, & Ryba, 2005); and individual child to family-centred practices (Sukkar et al., 2016). Furthermore, ECIA (2014) and Moore (2012) discussed moving from a deficit and impairment focus to the promotion of meaningful participation in natural learning environments. The shift in practice is strongly congruent with the description of one participant in the current study, who talked about the move from traditional professionally-directed practices to those where the professional facilitated and supported the participation of children and families in natural learning environments.

The participant-mentioned shift is also in congruence with sources that discuss a move to an empowerment approach. In this approach, consumers are viewed as capable human beings, speaking, deciding and acting for themselves, dissimilar to dependency and advocacy models where the expert does for or on behalf of (Condeluci, 1995; Rappaport, 1981). In the ECI context, a collective empowerment approach extends a family-centred approach (see page 2 in the

Introduction) by emphasising participation at all levels of the ECI system, and achieving power through partnership, with families and educators building knowledge, skills and resources to put back into and enhance the environmental context (Turnbull, Turbiville & Turnbull, 2000). Participants were aware that coaching and participatory practices such as the routines-based interview both empowered families and educators and encouraged family-centred practices.

Not only was the adoption of the new practice seen to be occurring within a wider context of change, but coaching, along with the routines-based early intervention approach and the routines-based interview tool, were themselves seen as strongly mechanistic in the change. Findings about the role of coaching in moving to participation-based service delivery are in harmony with existent literature which alludes to practices and tools becoming instrumental in moving to a new paradigm. In 2003, Rush et al. suggested coaching was "a mechanism for *how* to provide early intervention services and supports that are family-cent[re]ed, evidence-based, and learner-focused" (p. 44). Some decades earlier, Kuhn (1962) stated that "no paradigm sorts its issues completely to perfect an underlying theory / idea, but when it does – it becomes a tool or instrument to help with "engineering" " (p. 79). In the current study, coaching was seen as a new means to empower both families and educators to work towards participation-based outcomes. However, it was not fully apparent from the data, just how influential coaching was in the shift toward a new paradigm, or whether a coaching approach was itself the new paradigm.

In addition to the changing ECI context, three professional learning contexts were described. These included governmental and non-governmental in-service professional learning, and learning in a pre-service professional qualification supported by the ECI community. Within these settings formal, informal and incidental learning (Evans, 2019; Jarvis, Holford, & Griffin, 2003; Marsick et al., 2009; Webster-Wright, 2009) took place. The presence of both pre-service and in-service professional learning resonates with Bruder (2016), who categorised these as the

two main types of ECI professional learning contexts. However, data in the current study allowed a fuller picture to be gathered, noting even students undertaking formal training in pre-ECI service were qualified EC teachers with varying years of experience working in the early years. Therefore, in-service training could be a term applied to any one of the participants in this study given their level of qualification and experience. Regardless, research in both pre and in-service professional preparation has been found to be limited (Dunst, 2015) and although pre-service education programmes overseas include training in collaborative practices for both ECE and ECI professionals (Alsalman, 2016), relatively little professional learning focuses specifically on coaching (Ward et al., 2019). This may be exacerbated by confusion over definitions and which type of coaching is being learned about (Kemp & Turnbull, 2014).

4.3.2 Discussion about how coaching was learned. Three main areas of findings were identified to show how coaching was learned. These areas included 1) physical learning mechanisms, 2) psychological learning mechanisms**,** and 3) professional learning in routines-based early intervention and routines-based interviewing. These findings will now be discussed.

1. The findings of this study differ from the majority of those mentioned in the literature because prior studies have focused on defined training activities rather than description of professional learning mechanisms in a naturalistic ECI environment. Salisbury et al. (2017) and Salisbury et al. (2010), for instance, outlined established and perceptible training activities designed for a wide-scale project supporting embedded learning opportunities in the home, through collaborative consultation with families. Jayaraman et al. (2015) referred to an organised coaching training programme as part of a state-wide evaluation. Therefore, with the exception of Douglas et al. (2019); and Schachter et al. (2019) this means that the literature does not account for informal and incidental types of professional learning. In the current study, participants have described the high value placed on opportunities for observation of coaching, reflection, and self-

directed learning, as well as activities that linked meaningfully to practice. This extends the information gained by previous research studies.

Overall, in keeping with the socio-cultural underpinnings of the study, data showed professional learning in coaching to be multifaceted, including original professional training, pre-exposure to coaching or its underlying principles, iterations of participatory practices related to coaching such as routines- based interviewing, and the current identified physical (people, resources, events, and learning transactions) and psychological learning mechanisms. Several studies similarly recognise the role of pre-service training and pre-exposure to underlying principles (Meaden et al., 2018; Salisbury et al., 2012; Schachter et al., 2019) as well as personal life experiences (Douglas et al., 2019) in helping with the ability to coach. Current findings are supported by the theoretical underpinnings of constructivism and existent professional and adult learning literature such as Knowles' andragogic principles, which have shown prior experiences and knowledge to be an important aspect of adult learning.

The current study findings indicated that although participants experienced learning individually, in general there was not a reliance on one mechanism, with both influential personnel and collaboration with peers also supporting learning about coaching. This confirms early years professional learning literature which not only highlights the benefits of collaborative learning in terms of "development of new skills and understandings" (Thornton & Cherrington, 2019, p. 424), but encourages a balance between professional learning that is carried out individually and collaboratively (Cherrington & Thornton, 2013).

In part, the range of professional learning mechanisms reported in the current findings contests limited evidence which suggests there is a gap in personnel preparation in coaching for new ECI professionals. Francois, Coufal, and Subramanian (2015) found that in pre-service ECI training, coaching, collaboration and involvement of family in the ECI team were not a focus of

theoretically-based lecture materials, and opportunities to put the concepts into practice were similarly limited. Current findings however suggested a variety of theoretical and practical professional learning activities in coaching had taken place, and many participants had an understanding of its underlying principles, such as its family-centred nature and therefore the role of the family in the coaching dyad. However, participants remarked that learning could have been structured to ensure those who had not attempted to practice coaching in their work or training role, were able to do so. Differences in findings may be because local ECI training and practical field experiences differ from those in America, or that the focus of Francois et al.'s study was on future speech language pathologists rather than early intervention teachers. In the current study over two-thirds of participants were learning about coaching whilst working in the field in ECI roles, whilst the remainder were training as early intervention teachers but were already qualified educators.

Some learning mechanisms evident in current findings were similar to those in the ECI coaching literature. Although caution should be taken in making comparison due to the small sample size of Douglas et al. (2019), and American setting of Schachter et al. (2019), both studies suggested whole day training in coaching approaches, and 'in-house' workshops were the predominant formal methods of learning. Professional learning workshops were also found to be common way to learn about coaching in Aotearoa New Zealand, with participants concluding these were somewhat useful to engage with theoretical material. However, as pointed out by participants, without practical exercises in coaching or being appropriately linked to ECI practice, some workshops were not as meaningful as they could be. In addition, it appeared to depend on regions as to which groups of professionals received follow-up to workshops. Thus, external influences of geography and resource availability were also found to impact how professional learning was carried out.

Data indicated the ECI professional to be an active participant in their own learning with engagement in learning transactions with resources and people playing a vital role. This finding is supported by research such as Shershneva, Carnes, and Bakken (2006) who discussed learning transactions in generalist – specialist medical consultations, in relation to clinicians' learning in practice. The current data, however, extends Shershneva et al.'s (2006) findings because physical and online tools were also included as part of the transactions, rather than personnel being the main source of teaching and learning. Therefore, in this study it can be said that participants learnt about coaching from interacting with both people and things, a situation that fits with both socio-cultural (Vygotsky, 1978) and socio-material learning perspectives (Fenwick, 2012).

Schachter et al. (2019) reported that for one-quarter of 101 participants in Nebraska, professional learning had involved being coached by a mentor coach to enhance coaching competence. However, in the current study findings, although there was some assistance offered by practicum field advisors, practice advisors, and peers, only a few participants had been involved in coaching to support learning how to coach. For example, one participant was coached in her EC educator role rather than as part of the ECI professional training she was undertaking. Thus, on the whole, coaching that had been experienced by participants, was not an organised aspect of a 'learning to coach' programme.

Where the individual learned about coaching on their own, this occurred through incidental workplace activities, formal self-directed learning, and reflection. However, coaching is not a solitary practice. Although an individual understanding of the new practice was useful and relevant for the ECI professional, a collaborative understanding in the context of the organisation or with clients was also needed. Edwards (2010) describes this as processes of internalisation and externalisation. From a socio-cultural perspective, learners take on new knowledge, which leads them to interpret the cultural context differently (internalisation); this changes the way they act

(externalise), and in turn how they are interacted with and how they see the world (Edwards, 2010). This phenomenon was demonstrated in the current study when ECI professionals initially learned about coaching theoretically, and later trialled it with hypothetical or real life coachees who responded positively to the practice. This shows the coach (and the coachee) that coaching has potential to work and could be judged as a useful practice.

2. Consistent with socio-cultural theory, psychological learning mechanisms were also reported as an important aspect of professional learning. Psychological mechanisms showed how participants identified and took on board new information, compared and contrasted coaching with other practices, and reflected upon new learning and practical application, creating new personal knowledge in the process, and allowing them to let go of strategies that did not fit with the new practice. This data indicates that participants followed learning processes found represented in Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning objectives, to the level of evaluation, showing factual, conceptual, and some procedural knowledge (Bloom, 1956; Bloom et al., 1984). The psychological mechanisms reported also showed strong alignment with constructivist experiential learning theory, which sees learning as a process of gaining concrete experience, reflecting upon what one has observed, assimilating reflections to construct new ideas, and performing new actions based on these ideas (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005).

Strongly resonating with notions about growing awareness from coaching methodologies (Whitmore, 2009), some participants in the current study discussed their realisations about coaching in the context of the workplace, for example, how families or educators might respond to coaching, their own responses to coaching, or how coaching could be useful in particular situations. This implies that reported psychological learning mechanisms were metacognitive as well as cognitive. Metacognitive processes include those where learners are able to know and

describe their own thought processes, to regulate thinking, and problem solve to change thinking (Flavell, 1979; Prytula, 2012).

Participants' psychological mechanisms of learning can also be compared to an indigenous Māori perspective. Royal (2005), Rameka (2012), and Ministry of Education, (2009) discuss *mohiotanga*, *matauranga*, and *maramatanga* as different types of knowledge. *Mohiotanga*, concerns what was known or brought to the current situation, *matauranga*, the knowledge held and transmitted, and *maramatanga*, enlightening or what was realised. Considered in relation to the current study findings, participants reported having initial understandings of coaching prior to their engagement in professional learning. Their understanding grew as knowledge was transmitted to them through professional learning. Here, participants talked about finding out, thinking and knowing. Findings also focused on what was realised by participants. Specifically, new understandings about coaching were gained through both practical action and reflection, resulting in a state of increased awareness about the practice. This was evident where participants spoke about insight, gaining awareness and realisations.

Finally, and although implicitly rather than explicitly a feature, the process of unlearning was present in the current research. This process fits with research which suggests unlearning takes place both for individual professionals (Gupta, Boland, & Aron, 2017) and collectively at organisational level (Tsang & Zahra, 2008), and that the "emergence of new skills cannot happen without simultaneously unlearning or forgetting previous behavioural patterns that are often deeply engrained" (Lanzara, 2016, p. 14). As in the present context where participants appeared aware that coaching was another new practice in a history of changing service models, practices and resourcing, Gupta, Boland, and Aron (2017) noted clinical practice for health professionals is in a constant state of change, and this is the context in which professional learning, and indeed unlearning of old practices takes place.

3. Various methodological sources suggest the occurrence of unexpected findings is not only characteristic of qualitative research but adds to the richness of study data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Rubin & Rubin, 2004). One unanticipated finding was that routines-based early intervention and routines-based interviewing played an integral role in professional learning in coaching. Because it was known at the outset of the study that routines-based interviewing had been introduced in the context of participatory practices in natural learning environments, clarification of this was not sought from participants. It was a surprise therefore, when it became so commonly discussed. However, the strength of data that is introduced by participants without prompting needs to be acknowledged (Lofland, 2006).

It is difficult to determine why professional learning in routines-based early intervention was copiously reported, although a number of reasons can be surmised. It is possible that this was because it was the most recent professional learning that had undertaken by participants. Whilst Dunst (2015) advocates for professionals with specialist knowledge involvement in professional learning, Timperley et al. (2007) suggested this is a less-needed requirement. However in this study, it was shown the introduction of routines-based early intervention by developer and influential figure Robin McWilliam ensured that professional learning in this approach had snowballed. Therefore, a further explanation for the prominence of routines-based early intervention in the data could be that participants were validating the efforts that had been made in professional learning in this iteration, by endorsing its use in the research forum. However, given that participants knew the focus of the current study, a further explanation could be that they shared about the professional learning because they believed it to be most associated with coaching. Specifically, participants may have perceived it to dovetail neatly with these practices, or seen at least some aspects of routines-based early intervention as synonymous with coaching and had polarised the concept around an individual model.

Current findings resonated strongly with research which indicates family-centred practices situated in the child's natural learning environments are an integral part of a routines-based early intervention approach (Hughes-Scholes, Gatt, Davis, Mahar, Gavidia-Payne, 2016; Jennings, Hanline, & Woods, 2012; McWilliam, 2010). However, the current data did not go further to confirm effectiveness of the approach. This is in contrast to Hwang, Chao, and Liu (2013), who found that although there was no difference in developmental outcomes, a routines-based early intervention approach is more effective than traditional home-visiting intervention in regard to enhancing the child's self and social independence function, and in meeting family-selected child goals that served to promote community participation.

Current findings showed exposure to the routines-based interview resulted in participants reflecting on their ECI practice, comparing it with traditional practices, and considering new ideas about service delivery and the role of the family and primary educator in ECI processes. In literature, routines-based interviewing has been shown to draw attention to family change priorities and allow the development of specific functional goals embedded within everyday routines, which results in higher quality, meaningful, individualised planning for children and families (Boavida, Aguiar, & McWilliam, 2014; Hughes-Scholes et al., 2016; McWilliam et al., 2009). This is especially useful for maintaining direction of learning pathways and evaluating outcomes, and makes the need for generalisation of goals almost non-existent. Therefore, both current data and the extant literature concur that the routines-based interview is recognised as an excellent tool for focused development of individual plans. Further, participants in the current study noted the connection between the routines-based interview and coaching as a way of supporting the ongoing implementation of the plan, thus rendering both practices valuable.

Previously in this chapter (page 115) there was discussion about the belief that professional learning in coaching was not a top-down imperative, yet the introduction of routines-based early

intervention and the routines-based interview, was. This is evidenced by the wide scale approach to professional learning in the routines-based early intervention and routines-based interview in Aotearoa New Zealand. The majority of participants reported access to routines-based interview training. However, access did not mean all had been equally engaged. Due to their current work roles, a few participants were reliant on practicum training or their own experience of participating in a routines-based interview as an EC educator to learn about it. Some had not been able to participate, but had heard about it. There was a perception routines-based interviewing was something that should be sought after as an important practice tool.

Lanzara (2016) suggests a range of responses can occur when a new tool or technology is introduced or trialed depending on individual or contextual factors. The implementation process can be accepted or resisted. In the case of the routines-based early intervention and the routines-based interview, ECI professionals who had been involved in training appeared to be genuinely interested in how it had made them re-think practice. Those who had not yet experienced routines-based interview as an educator, or received training in routines-based early intervention were keen to find out what the approach entailed. Therefore, although a few challenges were perceived (discussed below) the neutral to positive tone of participant reports suggested a general acceptance of the routines-based early intervention approach and routines-based interviewing tool. Boavida et al. (2016) noted that even if the professional learning programme in routines-based early intervention / routines-based interview is well organised, inexpensive, and highly accessible, attrition rates across training show not all professionals engage in professional learning in the same way. In light of data in the current study, this may be because professionals look at the training from a broad angle lens, and see the new practice as a passing phase, or that it could be similar to intervention processes that are already in place.

Overall data suggests professional learning in routines-based early intervention and the routines-based interview played a role in ECI professionals' readiness for learning in coaching. The professional learning iteration allowed participants to gain a sound idea about what participatory practices in natural learning environments looked like, including their theoretical background. However, this could also have been because some ECI professionals already had a good awareness of theoretical principles in family-centred practice, fostering independence and capability building, and they individually made these connections in their thinking. This fits with the andragogical concept of adult learning which suggests adults tie new learning to prior knowledge and experiences (Knowles et al., 2015). As well as being an instrument which catalysed a move toward a coaching approach, the way in which routines-based early intervention was introduced could be viewed as an effective model for implementation.

Challenges with routines-based interview implementation were also discussed, including cultural applicability, logistics in terms of time, and the danger in losing focus on the child. Although routines-based interviewing has been promoted as an ecological tool and thus responsive to differing cultural environments, it has also been critiqued in practice settings due to its formality and intrusive nature. The use of routines-based early intervention has been purported to occur globally (for example, Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, Singapore, Spain, Portugal, and Taiwan (Younggren, Kastanis, & McWilliam, 2016)), however little data in its effectiveness across these countries exists. Furthermore, evaluation of the experience of routines-based early intervention and the routines-based interview from a family or whānau perspective is very limited and requires further investigation (Ohomairangi Trust, 2018). Where evidence in the routines-based interview is available from different countries, the approach has been adapted (or at least renamed) for use and outcome measurement purposes. In New Zealand, for example, the use of a term other than 'interview' has been trialled, because of the negative connotations of a formal 2-hour interview

process with families (McWilliam, 2019). Such adaptation fits with the findings of the current study which raise concerns about cultural applicability.

In addition, current findings emphasised the routines-based interview as a family-focused tool which risked bypassing the needs of the individual child with special learning needs. This finding from the current study is corroborated in Hughes-Scholes et al. (2016) who also found a challenge of using the routines-based interview was in how child-focused learning and development goals could sometimes be overlooked by the family which led to professionals' feelings of "frustration" (p. 37). With coaching also a family- centred practice, it similarly runs the risk of failing to keep goals for the child a central focus. However, in practice, both tools could be adapted to focus on some child development goals.

The perceived association between the routines-based early intervention and coaching is mentioned above, but current study findings further showcased participants' understandings about the place of coaching in the approach, and the relationship between the routines-based interview and coaching (see page 108). Acknowledgement of the place of coaching in the routines-based early intervention approach has been somewhat confused in the literature due to the use of the term collaborative consultation. Hughes-Scholes et al. (2016) remind us "relatively little empirical evidence exists regarding ECI professionals' coaching of caregivers in community-based settings as a complementary component of a routines-based intervention approach" (p. 32). However, conversely, coaching has been identified to be part of the routines-based early intervention approach, and a necessary component of working toward family and educator goals (McWilliam, 2016; Boavida et al., 2014). Although these links may not be clear in previous literature, they were made more explicit by a few participants in the current study. Furthermore, *all* participants who mentioned routines-based interviewing or routines-based early

intervention perceived professional learning in these and in coaching itself, to be part of a shift to a new approach in practice.

CHAPTER FIVE

Findings 2: What Understandings of Coaching Do ECI Professionals Have?

For the ECI professional to begin to apply coaching in the field, it is necessary to know what coaching is and what it involves, practically. This chapter presents findings which describe the understandings of coaching held by the study's 15 interview participants, as a result of their participation in professional learning. The chapter is divided into three main sections. The first two sections look at participant understandings of coaching at a theoretical level – i.e. their self-declared knowledge after participation in professional learning activities. The first section presents an overview of participant understandings, including examples of whole definitions. The second section, which is based on more in-depth data analysis, presents key understandings of what coaching is, and is not. The third and final section reports more comprehensive understandings that came about for those participants who had trialled coaching in practice.

5.1 Coaching Knowledge Gained through Professional Learning

Based on participants' offerings, it was clear their knowledge of coaching had increased through engagement in the professional learning process. Participants' descriptions about what and how they had learned through professional learning revealed theoretical knowledge of coaching had developed both in depth and clarity, as well as an increased focus on the ECI sector. Following professional learning, all participants provided a description or definition of coaching to some degree, in contrast to the uncertainty reported by some participants prior (see page 84). Examples of definitions shared by each participant can be found as follows:

Table 5.1

Examples of Participants' Definitions of Coaching

Participant	Description
1	it is an intentional conversation…it's a new way of knowledge transfer
2	you begin by being very open about finding out what the person knows or what their perspective on the situation is… and you …build your understanding into what your next step is
3	a reciprocal practice that provides an opportunity to engage the person that you are supporting… in a conversation that really helps to analyse what it is they are wanting to achieve for themselves
4	it would be more alongside and doing it together…and it's not about me, I mean…I think there would be some modelling involved but it's not about me showing the right way "look at me", "look how I do it and copy", its more about doing it as a team and sharing information and providing them with opportunities to come up with the answers themselves
5	getting alongside a family and problem solving and coming up with solutions, but not as me standing as in the expert role and I have all the answers and the parent as you know "you don't know anything". So, it's probably I see it as a joint exercise of really empowering and probably facilitating a parent… to come up with the best solutions for an issue….to really get to the stage where they think actually no "I can problem solve this" and I can actually come up with these solutions but with the knowledge that there's someone alongside them
6	from my perspective I think coaching involves working alongside children and supporting and in-skilling parents to develop emotional intelligence in their young children...firstly I think being aware of the child's emotions…
7	a way of working with the … the adults, the families, the teachers…the people supporting a child perhaps that we're working with as well… I think kind of building on what they already know, looking forward to what they would like to see for that child and I think for me, it's quite yeah getting my head around it. It is a bit of a different way of working that I really like in the way that you're… you're acknowledging what they know, what they do.. You're building on their strengths and things by adding where… yeah what they'd like to do with that child. What you bring to that as well…
8	just to have a conversation, like you're leading a conversation perhaps and affirming what they know or what they want to do
9	really listening to them so that they feel heard without judgements, you know paraphrasing back what they've said and making sure there's no judgement so that they feel heard before we go to the next stage
10	one of the most important is being able to build a relationship…with the person that you're working with, no matter what…and going in with the perception that… people always have something in their kete [woven basket] - that they're not devoid of anything...

11	asking the right questions….instead of doing it for a person actually trying to give them that feedback or feed forward to keep them motivated and to be able to solve their own problems
12	very subtle and natural…open ended questions… you'd probably be trying to get the parent to think about it for themselves
13	it's not a consultation that it's not about me as an EI ... telling the parent or the teacher what to do or suggesting what they do it's not, the relationship is different in coaching, it's not about me being the expert…
14	you've got to be really in tune with the adult in terms of and knowing…where…they want to go – or the steps they want to take in their learning with their child
15	identifying what people are doing really well and trying to… and emphasizing that to them and feeding back

Whilst before professional learning many participants had referred to sport or life coaching, afterwards most had narrowed their descriptions to coaching which took place in ECI, thus referring to a field specific practice. In addition, changes were evident in terms of who was involved in coaching, as participants identified that it took place between an ECI professional and the adults around the child, namely parents or other family members, EC educators or support workers. For example:

> a way of working with … the adults, the families, the teachers…the people supporting a child… [Participant 7]

The exception to participants' understanding of those involved in ECI coaching, was where one person referred to a practice carried out between an adult and child to support regulation of emotion (see Participant 6 in Table 5.1 above) also known as emotional coaching.

Overall, it appeared all ECI professionals experienced increases in knowledge in coaching as a result of the professional learning in which they were involved; but, a lack of surety of what coaching was still existed for some. For example, three participants demonstrated a position of being unsure through direct admission "I'm probably a bit vague on it to be honest" (Participant

4), by inflection in voice indicating this to be the case, or by requests to the researcher to clarify what coaching was in the interview. For example,

> Would you say that that comes into coaching? [Participant 12]
>
> So is that kind of coaching? [Participant 15]

However, one of these participants clarified this unsureness by saying she *did* have some idea of coaching, but was uncertain of how to explain it due to a lack of confidence and limited practical application:

> it seems like oh I know this but then articulating it in an academic way it's not something I'm confident in because I feel like I haven't done enough on it
> [Participant 12]

Further breakdown of participants' interview responses uncovered a number of more specific findings which showed participants' key understandings. These findings will be outlined below.

5.2 Participants' Key Understandings about Coaching

5.2.1 Understanding what coaching is not. In the early stages of data analysis, preliminary partial analysis suggested the five participants were surer of an apophatic definition of coaching rather than a cataphatic one; that is, knowing what coaching *was not*, more confidently than what it *was*. The remainder of interview data revealed similar findings, however later definitions were not as strongly focused on the negative. Overall, several participants differentiated between coaching and other practices and ways of interacting with families and educators. In general, it was perceived to differ from traditional ways of doing ECI practice. They also knew that coaching was *not* supervision (though it shared some features) (Participants

1, 2 and 9)); was *not* teaching or mentoring (Participants 2 and 11); and, was *not* consultation (Participants 1 and 9).

Coaching is not supervision. One participant indicated in the early stages of professional learning she was unsure how coaching was differentiable from supervision because of the practices' interchangeability (Participant 2):

> I'd done quite a lot of reading and training around supervision…so I found it very difficult to tease out what is supervision practice and what is coaching practice, because …people seem to use different terms for actually what was the same thing [Participant 2]

However, this view was not shared by other participants. For example, one participant stated:

> it's quite different from supervision [Participant 1]

whilst another described the difference quite clearly:

> it's that equal footing in the coaching relationship, there's no hierarchy or stuff going on, but for supervision often there is because it's about making sure that you're meeting criteria … [Participant 9]

Therefore, although participants generally acknowledged that coaching might be used within the supervision process, meaning the two practices shared some strategies, a key difference identified was that coaching was egalitarian whereas supervision usually had existent power structures in place.

Coaching is not teaching. Traditional teaching approaches utilise direct instruction and sometimes rote learning to achieve knowledge transfer and uptake – "previously you might have had a teaching model so you teach about how to, you teach someone something. You give a strategy, you'd provide a thing" (Participant 2). These methods take a direct approach where an idea or course of action has already been deemed suitable by the knowledge-holder, and imparted to the learner. In the words of Participant 4:

> Well being directed is more like a power situation I guess where they have the knowledge and they're telling me how to do it. But the problem with that is, you could do one part of it, and then you're stuck with the next step….you do that one bit then you stop. Then you've gotta go back - what do I do next? [Participant 4]

Supporting the idea that coaching was unlike teaching, one-third of the study's 15 participants said that coaching was not directive. Examples of this include:

> The coach provides the means for them to do that without …giving direct advice [Participant 2]
>
> not to them and I'm not going to do it for them [Participant 3]
>
> not so stuck in the "this is what you do" [Participant 4]
>
> It's not directive [Participant 9]

Similarly, almost half of the participants referred to coaching as being non-instructional:

> rather than me going in and giving answers that are right for their family…it's not about telling people what to do [Participant 4]
>
> It's not like just telling. [Participant 2]
>
> you might be coaching a person that says "right I want to win gold at the national championships right for swimming", … but that coach is probably going to be really just pushy and saying "right you need to do you know a hundred laps"….we don't really do it that way with families so it's not kind of quite so similar [Participant 8]

Furthermore, Participant 2 commented that coaching is not about "feeding back the observations and saying these are the things you need to change…and driving off" (Participant 2), where the ECI professional in an itinerant role might use an instructional approach but subsequently leave the site of teaching i.e. the EC centre or family home, thus relying on the educator or family member to retain imparted information and apply this independently.

Participants also mentioned that coaching was not similar to teaching practices commonly seen in ECE and ECI, namely observation (as part of assessment), and modelling and imitation. Two

participants identified coaching did not involve observation (Participant 9) and was not aligned with an assessment driven model focusing on deficits (Participant 7); where the focus is on the child and their deficits, and provision of a solution based on what is observed. Here, Participant 9 explains:

> so that the centres know that we're not here just to observe the child, it's actually about them and how they are supporting the child… [Participant 9]

Therefore, the focus becomes about what is happening in the child's environment, and the responsibility for what is happening is taken on by those people working with the child every day.

Data from a few participants (Participants 1, 4 and 11) indicated coaching was *not* modelling or imitation, where the ECI professional is demonstrates "in front of the adult…assuming … that the adult has picked up on what they've done" (Participant 1). In her description of coaching Participant 2 stated that coaching is not about 'showing' or 'doing for' the coachee/s:

> instead of doing it for a person actually trying to give them that feedback or feed forward to keep them motivated and to be able to solve their own problems
> [Participant 11]

and Participant 4 recognised that if there was modelling involved:

> it's not about me showing the right way "look at me", "look how I do it and copy"
> [Participant 4]

Coaching is not mentoring. One participant explained that through engagement in a formal professional learning programme she had recognised mentoring differed from coaching:

> since doing the paper I've realised what I've been doing is more mentoring as opposed to coaching [Participant 11]

However, although a difference between coaching and mentoring was recognised, there seemed to be a realisation that coaching could be utilised in mentoring in a similar way to how it might be used in supervision. For example "I take the coaching approach also when I'm mentoring for provisional registration" (Participant 12).

Coaching is not consultancy. Participants were aware that coaching is not consultation. For example, in the words of one participant:

> it's not a consultation… it's not about me as an EI ... telling the parent or the teacher what to do or suggesting what they do it's not, the relationship is different in coaching, it's not about me being the expert… [Participant 13]

In line with coaching not being consultative, nearly half of participants also noted the non-expert nature of coaching. For example:

> I think that kind of greyness fits with coaching, you know, it's not expert driven, get that idea out of your mind, there could be a whole other way to explore what's going on, what possibilities could happen, doesn't have to be my idea, it's one of the mix. You know … yeah… greyness. [Participant 9]

> look, I'm not an expert, I haven't got a magic wand [Participant 10]

> not as me standing as in the expert role and I have all the answers and the parent as you know "you don't know anything" [Participant 5]

> It's not about … being the expert, so it's moving away from that [Participant 4]

Opposing views. While this section presents participant descriptions of ways they defined coaching according to what it was not, there were others who made distinctions contrary to these views in regard to directness, giving of instructions or information, and modelling or observation. For example, one participant pointed out that in coaching there may be a need to directly instruct families. Speaking metaphorically in explanation:

> but if you were on my basketball team and you didn't know how to play the game or got me to coach you I would tell you what I know and what I want you to try. So it's not

> being bossy but I do think being able to use your skill, your knowledge and expertise to support people to you know to achieve things [Participant 8]

Another participant saw coaching as the 'giving of information':

> So I think coaching to me is giving the information as much as possible about why this is happening as much as possible and getting parents to think logically about it, because most parents are very logical and if they have the information, but sometimes you just have to remind them. So I suppose to me the start of coaching is very much giving the necessary information and it's not as in I have all the answers but it's starting to say to them "think back, what was going on then and what was this?"…. we're often giving parents the information right from the beginning [Participant 5]

However, in this case coaching appeared to be illustrative of her work with families in general rather than the adoption of a specific coaching approach.

A further participant suggested with coaching "you're doing lots of talking and modelling and observing (Participant 7), while others believed it to include "observing" (Participants 3 and 6) Finally, one participant viewed coaching as a practice like teaching, because it could encourage "people to achieve the goals and outcomes they want" (Participant 8), however, it was unclear what form of teaching she meant – something more interactive and less directed or rather more traditional and didactic in approach.

Coaching was defined by exclusion by many participants as part of a process of comparing and contrasting with other interactional practices. Although findings suggested many participants believed coaching was not directive or instructional and that it did not take an expert approach, and therefore was not like supervision, teaching, or consulting, there were a number of contradictions present in the data. These included whether coaching involved the coach directing, telling and instructing, and observing and modelling. It is possible the inclusion of strategies such as observation and modelling may be distinctive to EC coaching, however, a similar conflict exists in education coaching literature and beyond. Further discussion regarding these contradictions can be found at the end of this chapter.

5.2.2 Understanding what coaching is. As mentioned earlier, preliminary analysis suggested participants may have been better informed about what coaching was not, rather than what it was. This could be attributed to an evolving theoretical understanding. Specifically, if the aim of professional learning was for a change in practice, then being able to rule out what coaching was not, demonstrated a shift in the way ECI professionals were thinking. It is possible these earlier findings were gathered from participants who had more theoretical knowledge than practical experience of coaching, however, this cannot be assumed. Comprehensive exploration of the whole data revealed multiple descriptions of 'what coaching is', allowing participants to further differentiate it from other practices. The ability to share more in-depth descriptions may have been influenced by some participants experimenting with coaching in practice or participating in additional professional learning, across the time the latter two-thirds of data were gathered.

Coaching as a model. Although just one participant (Participant 2) described coaching as a broader term aligning with the idea that it was an approach or paradigm, almost half of the participants referred to a coaching 'model' by specifically using this term. Other than emotional coaching (see Participant 6's definition on page 135), two other key models were mentioned. These were the GROW, and EC coaching models respectively.

Although no participant mentioned the author of the GROW coaching model by name, the work of Sir John Whitmore (2009) was referred to both directly and indirectly, either as the model as a whole - "that Grow model" (Participant 9); or, in reference to its four main parts - 1) Goal/s, 2) Reality, 3) Options, and 4) Will (Whitmore, 2009). Each of the four parts were identified by participants when explaining a whole way of coaching, for example "goals, identify the realities, barriers, opportunities, and plan a way forward" (Participant 3); or, as separate components as outlined in Table 5.2 below:

Table 5.2

Examples of GROW Components Reported

GROW component	Examples
Goal	"there needs to be goals" [Participant 10]
Reality	"So to help sort of clarify what it is that is the obstacle or the reality…[Participant 3]
Options	'opportunities' [Participant 3]
Will	"knowing what is going to happen" [Participant 9]

In terms of evidence, four participants discussed goals, one comprehensively outlined the concept of realities, three talked about options or in their words 'opportunities' or 'possibilities' (Participant 3 and 9), and five referred to planning or actions, aligning with the idea of - what the coachee "will" do - in GROW coaching.

The second model mentioned repeatedly was the EC model of coaching (Hanft et al., 2004; Rush & Shelden, 2011). Participants referred to this model by the name of some or all of its authors, by mentioning "the (green) book", or by identifying specific characteristics of the model. For example:

> the five components of Shelden and Rush [Participant 2]
>
> coaching in early childhood's quite…basic it's looking at the five …so things like having a joint plan and observation and that feedback being really important ….action… [Participant 1]

As mentioned elsewhere in this thesis (see section 4.2.1), the work of Rush and Shelden was also discussed by some participants who attended an event where these researchers presented, by some who had seen their work online, and where their book had been the basis for locally delivered professional learning workshops.

Coaching as a process. Overall, data analysis revealed numbers of participants had a strong sense of coaching as a process rather than a one-off intervention and saw the purpose of it being an ongoing sequence of actions. One-third of participants directly described coaching as a process (Participants 2, 3, 5, 9 & 13):

> this process [Participant 2]
>
> that process. [Participant 9]
>
> it is a process [Participant 5]
>
> it's a process [Participant 13]

Consistent with this description, and emerging in the data were descriptive terms which appeared to be process components, mentioned by at least half of the participants. The terms were similar, but not the same as those in the above mentioned coaching models of GROW and EC coaching, (and other coaching literature), suggesting that participants may have gained this knowledge through professional learning and had been in a process of integrating the information to make sense in the ECI context. Four main phases were apparent in participant descriptions although these were not mentioned in an orderly sequence by participants. The phase components were: 1) Starting where you're at, 2) Discovering, 3) Doing, and 4) Building on. Please see Table 5.3 below for examples from the data.

Table 5.3

Coaching Phases Emergent in Data

Coaching phase	Example
Starting where you're at	we just need to concentrate on what's happening here and now... [Participant 5]
	what's working now [Participant 7]
	where parents learning is at [Participant 14]
Discovering	to come up with their own solutions [Participant 5]
	to come up with the answers themselves [Participant 4]
Doing	to follow through with what's been decided on, you know the action [Participant 10]
	at the end, it's not just walking away and saying "see you next week". It's having what they're going to do [Participant 1]
Building on	building on [Participant 2] move on to the next step [Participant 4] bolstering adults existing skills…strategies [Participant 9]
	you're building on [Participant 7]

Coaching actions and strategies. A number of other actions or specific strategies were mentioned in relation to the above coaching phases, but were seen as relevant to the entire coaching process rather than its distinct parts. These included facilitating, gaining awareness, identifying, thinking, decision-making, reflecting, and learning; provision of feedback; and, direct inquiry through questioning. Please see Table 5.4 for a breakdown of frequency of occurrence of these terms in interview transcripts.

Table 5.4

Occurrence of Excerpts Regarding Coaching Actions and Techniques

Action	Number of Participants	Number of excerpts
Becoming aware	3	4
Identifying	2	4
Thinking	2	2
Decision-making	2	3
Reflecting	7	8
Learning	2	5
Facilitating	4	4
Feedback	3	5
Questioning	11	19

In particular, questioning by the coach was seen as a critical coaching strategy by nearly eighty percent of participants:

> questioning…to have some insight into where they are at themselves [Participant 1]
>
> just questioning I think [Participant 4]
>
> questioning [Participant 6]
>
> asking the right questions [Participant 11]
>
> lots of reflective type questions that we use throughout the process [Participant 9]

Aspects of questioning will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six (see page 185).

Defining coaching by characteristic. Three main characteristics of coaching were also mentioned by participants. First, almost half of the fifteen participants described coaching as a **flexible** practice or one that could be adapted:

> it can be adapted [Participant 11]

> that's what you're doing constantly in terms of coaching, you're adapting [Participant 13]

Second, four participants described it as an **intentional** practice where a sense of purpose exists:

> it is an intentional conversation…[Participant 1]

> you know it is purposeful [Participant 10]

Third, and finally, two participants identified coaching as a **sustainable** practice:

> more sustainable… then, they've always got that knowledge and they can take it into the future [Participant 2]

> it's not about what families possibly achieve in the short-term, it's the long-term [Participant 1]

These characteristics help describe participants' overall perceptions of ECI coaching as a practice.

Coaching as a theoretically-based approach. Participants' data of descriptions and definitions of coaching were also examined for theoretical underpinnings. This examination revealed participants' view of coaching was theoretically based, and that these principles could be summarised into four main overlapping areas. Though participants did not use these terms directly, they have been collated according to humanistic, relational, conversational, and solution-focused principles, as depicted in *Figure 1*.

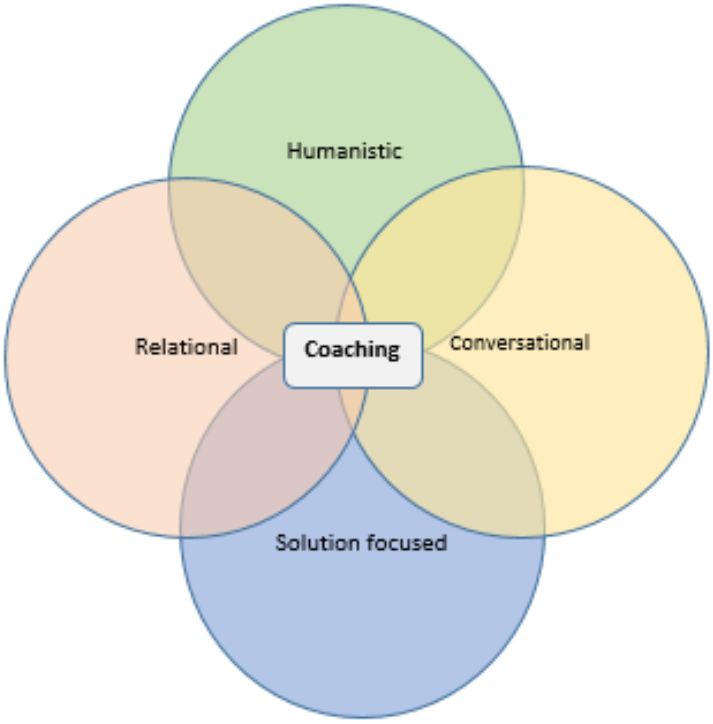

Figure 1: Theoretical Underpinnings of Coaching Evident in Data.

Humanistic. The first of these is **humanistic**, a principle whereby coaching is underpinned by the belief that all adults have the capacity to think, act and evaluate their own actions which fits with approaches that are person-centred and self-actualising. In the case of coaching in ECI, being person-centred equated to being coachee-centred or family-centred, and this was evident in the data:

you'd probably be trying to get the parent to think about it for themselves [Participant 12]

Further supporting the notion of being person-centred, data revealed that coaching was viewed as 'other focused':

open to the other person's idea [Participant 12]

what it is they are wanting to achieve for themselves [Participant 3]

it's all about them [Participant 10]

where they want to go [Participant 14]

> because it's coming from them [Participant 7]
>
> the 'other person' focus… you explore what's on top for them [Participant 9]

also demonstrated through 'putting yourself" as ECI professional 'aside':

> rather than what's on top for me [Participant 9]
>
> rather than me [Participant 11]

and 'believing in' and 'seeing' the other 'as capable'

> because they do know it [Participant 11]
>
> you're really building *belief* (with emphasis)… in people that… they are the experts [Participant 1]

Supporting the idea of self-actualisation in a humanistic approach, coaching was viewed by two participants as fostering independence:

> so that they don't need to rely on us as practitioners to lead them through the process, so that when we leave them and start fading out our supports they've actually got that sort of metacognition about you know reflective questions that they can ask themselves about solving their own problems [Participant 9]
>
> independence through developing confidence, capability and empowerment [Participant 3]

Also supporting the idea of self-actualisation were data representing empowerment, facilitation, and building coachee awareness (see also 'facilitating' and 'becoming aware' in Table 5.4 page 147). One-third of all participants described coaching as a process of empowering the coachee:

> supporting them…to be empowered rather than us doing it all [Participant 4]
>
> empowering a parent to really get to the stage where they think actually no I can problem solve this and I can actually come up with these solutions but with the knowledge that there's someone alongside them [Participant 5]

> they are going to be empowered and they are going to make great decisions for their children or babies because they know best and they know them the best and they know what works for them [Participant 5]

> it's really empowering parents… it's giving them a voice and making them feel that that really matters [Participant 7]

Building awareness occurs through a process of questioning (also discussed above on page 147), and is strongly congruent with notions of reflection and learning. Reflecting was also strongly represented in the data with almost half of participants mentioning it in their descriptions of coaching (See Table 5.4, page 147):

> it's also primarily about reflection. Providing a space for the parent or teacher to reflect on the situation and analyse, critically think about what they are doing [Participant 2]

> using the questions to get the parent to be reflecting on what happened [Participant 14]

> how to reflect on what they have tried [Participant 3]

> to self-reflect [Participant 4]

> revisiting [Participant 10]

A number of other characteristics aligning with a humanistic approach were also evident. Coaching was described as "positive" and "respectful" – (Participant 12), "open" (Participants 2, 9, 10, 12) and "genuine" (Participant 10). In addition, one-third of participants said coaching involved affirmation:

> so a lot of the affirming [Participant 10]

> affirming what the person already knows [Participant 2]

> affirming what they know or what they want to do [Participant 8]

and one-fifth mentioned its non-judgemental nature:

> not judging…its taking away that judging [Participant 10]

rather than being dismissive and making assumptions [Participant 6]

without judgements you know paraphrasing back what they've said and making sure there's no judgement so that they feel heard before we go to the next stage [Participant 9]

Relational. The second theoretical principle apparent in the data was relational. Given that coaching is carried out from a humanistic perspective it is unsurprising that participants frequently described coaching as being situated in the relationship:

all coaching is based in the relationship [Participant 8].

coaching is much more of an open relationship-based interaction [Participant 2]

building that relationship [Participant 9]

coaching as relationship [Participant 11]

The relational principle was also frequently represented as working 'together':

saying what can we do together [Participant 4]

a joint exercise [Participant 5]

connecting [Participant 6]

working with [Participant 6]

you're more doing it as a team [Participant 7]

it's more partnership [Participant 9]

Characteristics of positive relationships were also evident in the data. Participants shared that coaching was "warm" and "friendly" (Participant 9), and that it involved trust:

> so that relationship and trust is really really really important [Participant 10]

Participants also mentioned a sense of safety e.g. a safe "space" (Participant 9), relational trust being enhanced by a coach that was "in tune" (Participant 6) with the coachee, and "time" being taken to carry out the coaching process (Participant 5, 8, 10). Within the data, the negotiation of the coaching relationship was perceived as important by two participants:

> one of the key components…is negotiating that relationship first too. So having… so having that really well established [Participant 2]
>
> describing what is going to happen before you do it, so that they know [Participant 9]

The coaching relationship was also viewed from the perspective of reciprocity (Participant 3), and sharing (Participants 2, 4, 10), including the sharing of power or people being 'equal' (Participants 4 and 9).

Conversational. The third principle of coaching identified in the data was conversational. Over half of participants directly identified coaching as conversational:

> it's an intentional conversation…different from other conversations [Participant 1]
>
> but if we're talking about coaching within early intervention…. the model I'm familiar with is the way of structuring a conversation [Participant 2]
>
> learning conversation [Participant 9]
>
> in a problem-solving support-based conversation [Participant 3]
>
> to have an open conversation [Participant 12]
>
> talking [Participant 10]

Both listening and speaking roles in the conversation were acknowledged in the data. Participants described the importance of listening:

just listening, you know [Participant 10]

really listening…so that they feel heard [Participant 9]

that's such a big part of it as well is just being able to listen and focus on what people are saying [Participant 13]

feeling that they're being listened to [Participant 7]

with the idea of holding back from sharing information or advising emphasised:

not interrupting [Participant 6]

it's not jumping in and giving the answers [Participant 5]

...she's got lots of good ideas on the topic, she's seen that quite a few times. She knows exactly how you fix it…but she's said "what have you tried?"
[Participant 2, describing another early intervention teacher practicing coaching]

The role of speaking in the coaching conversation was talked about most often by participants when they mentioned questioning. Material on this finding was presented on page 147 of this chapter.

The conversational nature of coaching was also identified with descriptions of it being 'natural' and 'subtle':

it was just about it being natural [Participant 12]

it looks like nothing to some people [Participant 12]

it's more fitting in with something that you would do naturally [Participant 4]

In other words, the practice can be integrated into conversation and has potential to be perceived as non-existent to the uninitiated.

Solution-focused. A fourth and final principle evident in the data was solution-focused. A few participants specifically mentioned a solution-focused approach to coaching:

> to come up with the best solutions for an issue [Participant 5]
>
> I got that it was solution-focused [Participant 11]
>
> it's kind of talking through that if you like with the solution in focus [Participant 3]
>
> find solutions together [Participant 6]
>
> yeah aim in mind [Participant 15]

Over half of participants acknowledged that coaching focuses on a desired situation and involves planning actions to achieve this, by way of facilitated problem solving:

> how to problem solve [Participant 3]
>
> problem solving and coming up with solutions [Participant 5]
>
> you know so you're problem solving together [Participant 10]
>
> they can ask themselves about solving their own problems [Participant 9]
>
> to be able to solve their own problems [Participant 11]

When utilising problem solving, coaching's flexibility (see page 147) was identified as important: whereby, if one pathway to a solution was not working, there were multiple options present and another could be chosen.

5.3 Changing Understandings from Implementing Coaching

As participants began applying coaching theory in practice in response to professional learning, many were able to identify coaching strategies in their own and others' every-day work. Necessarily, as a result of increased understanding, this included the professional's reflective evaluation of coaching attempts. In this case, the absence rather than the presence of coaching strategies was noted:

> I know like when I was on practicum sometimes an EI would say oh that's coaching and I remember thinking in my head, well actually that's not coaching, … it was actually me just telling a teacher how to play a game and she said oh you did a great job at coaching. I knew it wasn't and I wasn't about to say – I didn't want to say in front of her oh that's not coaching…I just thought in my mind that's not actually true coaching [Participant 13]

5.3.1 Working toward a principles-based approach. Participants also talked about realising that although existent coaching models and processes could be followed, in the end, different techniques could be applied in different ways, at different times, and in different circumstances according to what was perceived as appropriate:

> you'd be using different techniques with people… in a supportive way [Participant 12]

> what we're kind of exploring at the moment is um it's called the GROW model, and it's a really wonderful…have you [heard] about it? Yeah it's really really good. We try to use that and it's a really simple model to use in our own minds. We don't need to let the other person know we're using the GROW model, but we can use it to plan for our conversation or we can use it to you know problem solve, you know to explore things at meetings... [Participant 9]

However, others described how applying coaching had helped them reach an understanding that there were some imperatives in a coaching approach:

> Like you can see that because it is the same no matter where you are you're still going to use the questioning and you're still going to be using the way reflective questioning the reflective prompting for parents and things like that. So that aspect of coaching is the same [across coaching situations] [Participant 14]

Participant 13 identified these key coaching imperatives to be 'principles', and also suggested there is a constant need for flexibility in implementation:

> it's almost like you find your way but keeping within those principles [Participant 13]
>
> that's what you're doing constantly in terms of coaching, you're adapting [Participant 13]

These realisations indicate participants had identified the difference between rule-based and principles-based approaches to coaching, where flexibility is part of coach responsiveness to coachee. That those who had tried more coaching could see this difference more clearly suggests an experienced or proficient coach would be able to carry this out more easily.

In line with the idea of coaching being a responsive process of intervening, reliant on key coaching principles such as questioning, Participant 3 described the process of learning about and integrating coaching into everyday practice rather than the implementation of a "discrete intervention",

> But that's people's learning isn't it. That's the pathway for a person learning. You learn it and it looks like it's in a box. Then you get out in your practice and you reflect and you modify and you go back out again. And, if you are active in doing that, you start to see the links of where it fits in to other work that you do. And, you become confident and have got this lovely list of questions in your mind, tucked away that you pull out…. and processes that you use. My way, my style, you develop up your style of meeting teachers, engaging with them, asking questions etcetera. It's not... …that's when it becomes… moves away from "I'm coaching now" to "I'm just…this is me the practitioner and I've got this whole range of skills, and I can pull them in where appropriate". So, I can understand why people think that. …..And when you learn Hanen, when you learn Triple P, when you learn coaching, that's what it is. But actually over time if you practise it well and get confident, it just becomes what you do, it no longer is a particular discrete thing. It's no longer a treatment. There you go… yeah, as opposed to a helpful responsive individualised…intervention [Participant 3]

5.3.2 Deeper understandings about coaching. When participants who had implemented coaching talked about their perceptions of coaching, they had a broader and more in-depth

understanding of what the practice offered, compared to those who had yet to practically trial it. In particular, its future use and positive impact were discussed.

Future use. Aside from the suggestion coaching could be useful personally in family life by two interviewees, participants saw a multiplicity of opportunities for coaching in their work in the future - "there's a lot of ways that you can implement it" [Participant 12] and that:

> it will be ongoing… and continuous …in everything it's in everything that I'm doing… it's completely mixed in with everything we do [Participant 14]

Most intended to strengthen their coaching practice by 'reading', 'learning', or 'practising'. In the words of Participant 13:

> But I think I need to actually kind of keep refining it myself like … strengthen it more with the way I'm using it… I want to look at more around that whole area of questioning and seeing what I can do to strengthen my practice…before I feel…a lot more competent to … show others a way [Participant 13]

The sharing or dissemination of coaching knowledge with colleagues and wider ECI and EC communities was also beginning to occur:

> I've told my team about it at work…I was like oh I really love this theory it's so great and it's so natural to what we do…[Participant 12]
>
> I thought it'd be good to maybe just talk a bit more with … my other manager… at some stage about the whole process of coaching [Participant 13]
>
> you know these communities of learning…so we…have a managers and supervisors meeting maybe six times a year so I'm looking at ways that I can look at doing things in that kind of further just a little bit wider. [Our organisation] holds a conference every year and I did meet some teachers and managers who have done the course I know of at least maybe three have done and who are still working in centres so I'd really like to see us collectively present something at a conference at some stage and work it like that [Participant 13]

Further, there was discussion of how coaching may be used in practice in participants' current and future roles. Again, from Participant 13:

> you start to notice… how other people are … it just highlights when you see people who are…being more directive and you kind of think oh that could be said a bit differently …. I'm in a prime position as a manager I always think okay what am I going to, what am I going to… how is my practice going to change and how can I use well what I've learnt and implement it in the centre? It's looking for the opportunities [Participant 13]

In an independent ECI provision setting, one participant noted that the presence of different ECI disciplines meant there was scope for "coaching one another in terms of our ideas and theories behind certain aspects …we can draw off each other's ideas and strategies…" [Participant 14]. Additionally, Participant 11 talked about the coaching of EC teachers in an upcoming MoE pilot project in her region, and also in a prospective part time role she was about to take on, "to go around the other centres and give them support them so coaching I guess will come into that too" [Participant 11].

Positive impact of coaching. Despite the challenges noted with the adoption of coaching (see Chapter Six), and somewhat idealistic notions of what the practice might offer prior to trials of implementing, its positive impact at a practical level was indeed noted by a number of participants. Here, Participant 13 shares how coaching in a group setting offered opportunity for a quiet team member to speak and to open up the group's thinking as a whole:

> Oh they are all so capable and one teacher is quite reflective so almost as she talks she's answering the question herself, but another teacher who tends to be quiet I think it's been really good for her because it's allowed her to kind of have her own voice in a way and to be able to express things that sometimes normally wouldn't happen if you just say something. So I think it's been really good to really open up teachers … to say well actually I do know more than I think I do or actually I did handle that situation quite well or to re-think as a group and say yeah maybe we need to look at that a bit differently or… I like that when I hear the teachers saying – looking at a situation with a child and thinking that's something that's either affirming their practice or just a slight change in what they might've or could've set their – come to the conclusion I could've said it this way, and I'm going to try it again if something happens. It's been empowering for some teachers I think especially when you're in a mindset of you want to grow teachers and grow their capabilities. It's really giving them the opportunity to do that rather than sitting in a group and saying "I think we should do this". It's like it's limiting whereas I find if I'm asking

> more questions than giving answers then it's a lot more empowering for them. Especially when they come up with great ideas. That's the other thing… you know they just say things and you think I couldn't have thought that up you know…
> [Participant 13]

In addition, taking a coaching approach and attitude clearly allowed the participant to view the coachees as capable of having good ideas and the potential of growth through the process, and, that the coach them-self could learn from their coaching partner…

> and it's not about me who's been in teaching for twenty two years knowing everything you know. I'm still learning from them so when they come up with really good suggestions and ideas all on their own I just think let's go with it yeah. So that's the upside of it [Participant 13]

Key findings of this chapter will now be discussed in relation to relevant research.

5.4 Discussion of Findings about Understandings of Coaching

The data in this chapter indicate that most ECI professionals gain their familiarity with coaching through professional learning. This is in line with the literature that promotes the benefits of professional learning (Bruder, 2016; Dunst, 2015). Further, even participants who self-reported their professional learning was limited, were beginning to gain understanding of the practice. This could mean that even small amounts of exposure to professional learning content were useful.

Findings regarding participants' understandings of coaching help address a gap in empirical research regarding ECI professionals' coaching knowledge as it relates to the process of implementation. For example, previous studies have looked at implementation of coaching behaviours in response to specific coaching training (e.g. Jayaraman et al., 2015), or surveyed participants' perception of what coaching entails (Schachter et al., 2019), but few have

investigated underlying understandings of what coaching is as part of learning to practically employ the method.

Participants appeared reasonably sure of what the term coaching meant. This confidence was demonstrated by each participant being willing to articulate their own definition or description when invited to. This level of confidence is supported by evidence which suggests coaching is a reasonably clear-cut practice, for example Whitmore's GROW (2009); Salisbury et al.'s (2017) SOOPR caregiver coaching, and Rush and Shelden's (2011) five-component model; but stands in contrast with sources which indicate definitions of coaching may be somewhat conflicted and less straightforward (Bachkirova & Kauffman, 2009; Kemp & Turnbull, 2014). The ways in which participants expressed more confidence about 'what coaching is' after their exposure to professional learning, supports the ideas of Timperley et al. (2007), who suggest theoretical material is best introduced in early parts of the professional learning process. In the current study, participants' initial exposure to theoretical coaching knowledge allowed them to think about the new practice in relation to their current practice.

In this research, ECI professionals had developed an understanding about the niche of ECI coaching as opposed to coaching more generally, and considered who was involved in the coaching dyad or group. Participants' identification of coaches or coachees corresponded with those ECI team members listed in local early childhood, ECI (*Kei Tua o te Pae* – MoE, 2005; Liberty, 2014; MoE, 2011a), and EC coaching literature (Rush & Shelden, 2011). The only different coaching dyad mentioned was the one present in emotional coaching. Emotional coaching is an evidence-based practice promoted within EC and compulsory sector years, between parents, caregivers or educators, and children (Dunsmore, Booker, & Ollendick, 2013; Havighurst, Wilson, Harley, Prior, & Kehoe, 2010; Silkenbeumer, Schiller, & Kärtner, 2018; Wilson, Havighurst, & Harley, 2012).

Findings also showed that in the development of a clear self-definition of coaching, participants seem to demonstrate the need to clarify for themselves what coaching is not, before they can determine what it is. In particular, they acknowledged that coaching was not supervision, mentoring, or consulting, and differed from some aspects of teaching. This data differentiating 'what coaching is not' may have been informed by material in the EC coaching handbook which dedicates a chapter to help define coaching as a distinct practice (Rush & Shelden, 2011). Where interviewees from early in the study discussed this information, it is possible they had interacted with the Rush and Shelden resource.

The current findings also support generalist coaching literature that denotes differences between coaching and other practices (e.g. Williams, 2004); although Bachkirova and Kaufmann (2009) point out some of its components are not unique. In the current study, for example, participants indicated that coaching could be nested within a mentoring model, almost in a hierarchical relationship. This finding aligns with sources which suggest coaching may be carried out as part of, or alongside mentoring (e.g. Rowley, 2006; Solansky, 2010), and explains the interchangeable use of the terms (Brouwer et al., 2015). However, lack of clarity present when differentiating coaching from other practices could have an impact on the way ECI professionals develop understandings of coaching in early stages of learning.

Narrowed down, two key underlying differences separated coaching and other practices for participants in this current study. These were about the sharing of knowledge; and relatedly, the sharing of power. Firstly, in terms of knowledge sharing, except for the few cases where participant's ideas were conflicted (for example instructing as part of a teaching approach or advising as part of a consultant approach), coaching seemed to be less about knowledge transfer – or the 'giving' of knowledge from one person to another - and more about the acknowledgement that each person has something to offer because all parties held knowledge. These findings fit

well with the constructivist positioning where one person holds different rather than better knowledge than another. This position is similar to a *funds of knowledge* approach (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005); but differs from novice to expert frameworks (Benner, 1984, Daley, 1999; Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1985) which suggest a progression in knowledge and approach to performance occur, meaning some professionals are considered more expert than others.

Secondly, in terms of the sharing of power, coaching was perceived to be carried out in a situation where the coach did not have power over the coachee. Different power dynamics are described in full by Turnbull et al. (2000) and account not just for these two arrangements, but also for power shared 'with', and power that occurs 'through' the ECI process. As mentioned by Participant 1– no professional wants to believe that they have the attitude that they hold power over another in the parent-professional relationship, but it is very likely that espoused and working theories of practice (theory-in-use) could differ here (Argyris & Schön, 1974), impacting working relationships.

No one can contest that the ECI professional has considerable knowledge to share about all manner of things, notwithstanding child development. Based on participants' offerings, coaching involves egalitarianism in the coaching dyad, but may or may not include the transfer of knowledge from the more to less knowledgeable person. This raises potential issues around how families and colleagues perceive knowledge and power in the ECI partnership. In turn these perceptions may influence the way ECI professionals are able to work with parents and educators. Few ECI professional learning programmes focus specifically on ways to interact with families and educators in a practical sense. Therefore, ideas about knowledge and power in working relationships could be a starting point for theoretical discussion supporting practical application of coaching.

As well as the notions of knowledge and power running across the comparing practices data, one of the specific tensions to emerge were considerations around teaching as opposed to coaching. In generalist coaching literature, coaching guru - the late Sir John Whitmore (2009) suggests "coaching is not teaching at all, but is about creating the conditions for learning" (p. 5). However, in this study, some participants still saw imitation and modelling to have a place in the coaching process. There are two main possible reasons for this. Firstly, these strategies could be viewed as part of instructional coaching which is more closely linked to traditional teaching, and still present in many educational coaching contexts (Cornett & Knight, 2009). In Aotearoa New Zealand modelling and imitation have been part of traditional ECI practice, and prior to Te Whāriki's sociocultural curriculum, used in ECE also. Secondly, modelling and imitation may be legitimate strategies in some ECI coaching models (for example Hanft et al., 2004; Rush & Shelden, 2011), especially if these draw on behavioural theoretical influences. In the current study, reasons for choice of models or approaches discussed in professional learning were not stated, but reference to coaching aspects from GROW (Whitmore, 2009) and EC coaching (Rush and Shelden, 2011) were evident. This suggests those who designed or organised professional learning may have had an interest in and understanding of a particular model, and subsequently shared this information, thus influencing the ideas of participants who had been exposed to coaching in this manner.

The tension around the perception that traditional teaching strategies might be part of coaching relates to the conflict present in ECI coaching literature about the difference between instructional (intervener-directed) and facilitative coaching (Kemp & Turnbull, 2014; Stewart & Applequist, 2019). Seeking to identify a single ECI coaching type may be counterintuitive to the coaching paradigm; certainly, Whitmore (2009) himself stated "there is no one right way to coach" (p. 5). Nevertheless, it does seem appropriate that with the presence of such tensions, both professionals who utilise coaching and professional learning designers should consider

ontological and epistemological positioning of the practice, to see how their own understanding fits with underpinning theories and characteristics of modernism, post-modernism, and pragmatism for example (Bachkirova, 2017). Overall, in this study, the position that coaching was facilitative in nature and therefore leaning toward constructivist underpinnings, was held by most participants, with just a few alluding to aspects of instructional coaching in their explanations.

Literature advocates for coaches to be aware of many different models in order to have agility to differentially apply the most appropriate model (Barner & Higgins, 2007; Brockbank, 2008; Kauffman & Hodgetts, 2016). The participants in this current research however, seemed to concentrate on only one or two models, referring back to those encountered in professional learning and through their own experiences. Findings also indicated their adoption of coaching was occurring incrementally. Some participants had undertaken discrete learning of a defined model (for example GROW or EC coaching) whereas others had been introduced to coaching as an overall approach made up of specific components or strategies.

Of the coaching models mentioned by participants, neither was originally conceived by developers as a process. Whitmore (2009) did not necessarily see the four distinct aspects of GROW as a sequence, and Rush and Shelden similarly noted that EC coaching's characteristics of joint planning, observation, action, reflection, and feedback should be followed in a "fluid manner" because coaching itself is not a "linear" or "step by step process" (p. 60). Instead, each component could be variously used as part of the coaching process that is individually guided by the coachee. However, this current study found many participants *did* perceive coaching to be a process, suggesting they believed there to be a sequence of steps to be taken.

There was general consensus amongst participants regardless of professional learning experiences, that questioning had an important role in the coaching process. This finding aligns

with general coaching literature which emphasises the importance of questioning as a coaching strategy (Neenan, 2009; Stolzfus, 2008; Whitmore, 2009); and, ECI research which shows reflection and questioning are perceived by ECI professionals to be valuable coaching strategies (Douglas et al., 2019; Salisbury et al., 2017). Furthermore, from the coachee perspective, questioning leads to independent problem solving (Knoche et al., 2013). The weight of current findings indicated participants knew about the criticality of questioning in the coaching process. Some participants explained the purpose for its implementation was to increase coachee insight. This finding is consistent with research which highlights the role questioning plays in reflection and introspective inquiry (Douglas et al., 2019; Lorio et al., 2020; Romano & Schnurr, 2020; Shelden & Rush, 2011).

Some participants directly indicated coaching to be principles-based, whilst others showed this indirectly by describing coaching in terms which appeared to be congruent with humanistic, relational, conversational and solution-focused principles. These principles strongly align with those discussed across ECI and general coaching literature (de Hann & Gannon, 2017; de Hann & Sills, 2012; Flaherty, 1999; Grant & Cavanagh, 2014; Hanft et al., 2004; Rush & Shelden, 2011; Stein, 2009; Whitmore 2009). However, the principles differ from a coach-led approach where direct instruction is given (Cornett & Knight, 2009; Kemp & Turnbull, 2014). The current findings suggest ECI professionals may have read literature or been exposed to structured models in professional learning to inform their theoretical understanding of what coaching is. In addition, they may also have made practice comparisons in the context of their own work, and thus been describing coaching principles according to their own understandings.

Literature suggests motivation for ongoing learning comes about by capturing learner attention through initial knowledge gains in a topic (Jeffrey et al., 2012; Loewenstein, 1994). The identified relevance of the topic, and information gap between the small amounts of knowledge

held versus that which is not yet known, lead the learner to be increasingly motivated to learn more. In the current study, trialling coaching, however minimally, allowed ECI professionals to gain a better idea of the value of coaching in the field, as evidenced by participants explaining its merits. There was also interest in learning about coaching in the future. This suggested perceived value and engagement in coaching resulted in increased motivation to learn about the new practice, corroborating existent adult learning literature.

Trialling coaching led to participants perceiving it to be a collaborative communication and learning tool. Although literature has previously stated coaching's potentiality as a tool to support professional learning (Gallacher, 1995; Powell, Diamond, & Burchinal, 2012), the current study findings provide a more in-depth picture about its use as an everyday conversational tool that can be used formally and informally between professional peers to discuss all manner of relevant and difficult topics. Additionally, these findings coincide with a belief that coaching has resulted in a workplace coaching culture of collaborative conversations (Grant, 2017). Moreover, findings about coaching as a collaborative communication and learning tool correspond with literature which suggests coaching can have a ripple effect (Gallacher, 1997). For example, when the practice is utilised between professional peers, it can impact the way that conversations happen within organisations, and with educators and families in the field. Up until now, research has mainly focused on coaching with families or with professionals in the ECI team, but these current findings suggest a more indirect pathway also exists to influence practice. For this reason, further research is recommended to investigate the positive impacts of implementation of coaching in the field, a period of time after professional learning.

CHAPTER SIX

Findings 3 - What Implementation Has Occurred?

This chapter focuses on participants' implementation of coaching. The chapter has two sections. The first section examines the implementation of coaching that had been carried out at the time of interviewing the study's 15 participants. The second section presents comprehensive findings about the challenges which prevented further implementation of coaching from taking place, from the perspective of participants.

6.1 Implementation of Coaching in Practice

Participants had variously applied coaching in real life settings. Of the 15 participants interviewed in this study, 12 described the intentional trialling of coaching strategies in their work or in professional learning exercises (see Table 4.2 on page 100 of Chapter Four). However, as previously mentioned, some of this application of coaching was minimal. Indeed, only one participant indicated that a coaching approach was purposely integrated into the work she did every day in a non-field based role [Participant 3]; and, six had trialled it with families and educators, although two of these participants implied their overall work with families or educators could be considered coaching, even where specific coaching techniques had not been identified. All five of the participants who were in ECI training had tried coaching whilst on ECI practicum as well as some in their own roles in EC centres. For example, one participant described:

> I'm not you know in an EI job as such but working in the centre I've already been working with some parents and been utilising…a coaching approach when we've talked about a specific concern or issue with their child. For example we've got a boy who has some feeding concerns and he's doing really well at kindy but mum is saying at home it's not

> – it's a little bit more difficult. so when I'm talking to her I do use a coaching approach because I know they like to sit – sometimes parents say what should I do like a little bit like tell me what I should do. So it's really having a conversation finding out some information finding out what's important for them in terms of meal times and feeding, and using it –more of a coaching approach and trying to…build their capacity in a situation rather than me saying why don't you do this ….so I have really taken it on board and try to implement it in those kind of contexts where I'm talking with parents and even teachers. We have meetings and…sometimes teachers say because they know I've done the course they go oh – what's the best thing to do? So I don't say I think this is the best thing to do, we talk about it so we reflect on I get them to talk about situations they've been in and then kind of reflective questions and unpacking it and so getting them to come up with what they think might work best or what they could've done differently. So I definitely use it a lot more and I've found yeah it works really well because or else I'm just kind of going to do this and it's not really benefitting anybody [Participant 13]

A few participants had tried coaching mainly with peers or hypothetically in professional learning situations only. For example:

> I haven't been out and actually practised it with families from that position, but I have used it with colleagues ……. we're using coaching style to help each other with our goals….. So I've had a little bit of experience… [Participant 1]

It was noted by Participant 14 that some ECI professionals were more confident than others when it came to trying coaching in practice:

> I guess I'm one of those gung-ho braver people that just do it…that think oh that wasn't so bad. You know …I need things to be taken to that next level [Participant 9]

However, overall, no participants depicted themselves as having enough coaching experience to say they were proficient, instead preferring to state their coaching skills were at the learner or emergent stage and in need of more practise "I feel like I haven't done enough on it" (Participant 12).

6.1.1 Changes in practice. Participants who had applied coaching described specific changes in their ECI work in response to professional learning. In particular, these changes

included improved listening, and being more positive and affirming of the coachee and their ideas:

> that's one thing I've been doing a lot more is validating that the parent knows the child the best and so just trying to affirm parents I've used that phrase a few times like: you know your child best [Participant 12]

> At the moment, my coaching level is kind of identifying what people are doing really well and trying to… and emphasizing that to them and feeding back and… yeah picking it and saying, oh you're doing this really well [Participant 15]

There were also descriptions of talking less, and reducing instances of advising, telling or instructing in particular [e.g. Participant 14].

> from that [professional learning] workshop I tried to implement some of those practices in my conversations that I'd have, you know [in my role] it's all about influence. So it was useful for that, because people would come in and ask … I've got this problem, what do I do? And previously my usual approach in those settings would be to tell them. [Participant 2]

Most frequently however, there was an increase of questioning to encourage introspective inquiry and problem solving:

> it's …trying … different styles, different questions, for example two of my parents who just didn't engage at all by the end of it I had tried different ways of questioning
>
> [Participant 11]

> I do talk less but then …I also use more questioning to guide…to actually help the parent to reflect… I spend more time asking more and more questions and using the questions to get the parent to be reflecting on what happened …opening the way …using those open questions to you know…my words and my talking are less suggestive but more "what makes you think that" or "how do you feel" "how did that work "what and how did that work for you" and "what changed when you did that that way or in the context"…in the past when I first started in my job I might have asked one or two questions but now using those open questions to you know [Participant 14]

> Tell me how it went? Tell me what were the..? How can we work together to support this child? What do you want from this?" [Participant 10]

One participant suggested modelling was part of her coaching approach:

> Actually that's probably one of the best coaching things I've done with um adults like teachers is actually going in and modelling. You know? This is how we use it [Participant 15]

However, she also self-identified as being an emergent coach with her main ability being to affirm coachees, so may not yet have had a comprehensive enough understanding to decide whether modelling was a part of ECI coaching, and whether she would incorporate this into her individual approach.

Overall the majority of participants had tried coaching in real-life contexts, though for many this was not to any great extent. Alongside of practical experiences it appeared understandings of coaching had increased. The question may then be, why, when overall understandings of coaching were growing, had participants not applied it more readily. Answers to this question will be presented in the next section.

6.2 Implementation Challenges

A further theme emerging from the data were participants' perceived challenges of applying coaching in practice. The challenges related to 1) the ECI coaching context, 2) the practice of coaching itself, 3) professional learning, and 4) the professional and their practice.

6.2.1 Challenges in the ECI coaching context. Participants identified a unique set of challenges occurring in the ECI context under four main themes. These challenges were a) conflicting philosophical positions in curriculum and assessment, b) changing and contradictory service delivery approaches, c) working in EC centres, and d) working with families.

The challenge of differing philosophical positions. The local EC curriculum - Te Whāriki (MoE, 1996; 2017) views the child as a capable and competent learner in their own right. However, descriptions shared by some participants showed non-uniformity in philosophical position of ECI team members, regarding how the learner was perceived. For example, there was an inclination towards use of diagnostic medical labels by health-trained colleagues, and deficit-focused description of the child and their needs by those ECI professionals with a more developmental focus. Such tensions between medical, developmental, and sociocultural or ecological perspectives are unsurprising when professionals have been trained under different philosophical paradigms. However, conflicts between approaches to assessment and intervention when working together in the early years setting can be problematic when they occur. Examples from two participants follow:

> I mean there is a visiting therapist that …comes up who has been trained quite a while ago and probably comes in with a very similar model to what I had before starting this so it has been quite interesting and she will leave a list of instructions of what the parent needs to do with the child for when she comes back the next time and I just looked at the parent like, if you're anything like I was with my child they'd be driving out the driveway and I'd be screwing up the piece of paper cause it wasn't solution-focused [Participant 11]

> if you've come from a medical model, the hospital model, it's just not happening. It's really still very much seen as, and I know they're trying, working really hard on this, but doctors are here and parents are here. There's no like equal kind of sharing, and let's work at this together. And sometimes I think sometime they get therapists and they will say "No, well they've got to do it like this". But, and, "this is our goal", without actually addressing or listening to the parent, or supporting or giving the skills, and role modelling actually, ways that could work better [Participant 6]

> there's parts that work well and then we've still got the paediatrician who wants the blimin Carolina curriculum so that they have a measureable base, not a subjective piece of assessment [Participant 6]

Here, the conflict between a sociocultural and strengths-based curriculum, and medical or deficit focused approach are revealed. In particular, it appears medical professionals are more accepting of a developmental (see reference to the Carolina curriculum) rather than a sociocultural

approach (which underpins the EC curriculum). But, EC educators and ECI professionals also regularly struggle with the notion of developmental trajectories and typical projections if their training has focused on learning dispositions and a sociocultural curriculum (Carr, 2006; MoE, 1996; 2017). There was some evidence which showed participants considered the practice of coaching to align with ecological and strengths-based approaches, focusing on individual children and families in natural environments, for example:

> it's identifying strengths [Participant 3]
>
> coaching is really relevant in getting good assessment information and also around developing up plans that are functional and a good fit and realistic, cause you might go in and the family just says I just want him to talk. Well actually that's a great goal when you do your thorough assess… when you engage them in an assessment you work out actually that at the moment there are no single words being used. You know so it's bridging the gap between a broad goal to something that's quite specific, achievable, functional goals… that can be, that the strategies can be applied in everyday practice. [Participant 3]

However, there were scant data suggesting participants understood how coaching might be utilised in alignment with medical or developmental approaches. As discussed elsewhere, the perspective that coaching was a paradigm in its own right, was present (please see findings around the role of coaching in a shifting ECI context in Chapter Four page 85), however a few participants queried how coaching might fit when there was already a conflict between philosophical positioning present in the work of different ECI professionals.

The challenge of service delivery models. This section focuses on data about the two main types of ECI service delivery in Aotearoa New Zealand – centre-based and itinerant community-based, but also refers to the more recent model of primary service provision. Participants with insight into centre-based ECI services were careful to acknowledge the

difference between those that are solely centre-based programmes, and those that had both a centre and community based component in delivery. For example, from Participant 14:

> if you take [Independent Provider 1 (IP1)] and then you take [Independent Provider 2 (IP2)] and then you take us which technically we're all sort of similar because we're supposedly centre-based but then when you actually analyse us even deeper compared to IP1 and the way IP2 do it we're so different again….we're not twenty minute sessions with a particular…profession [Participant 14]

These individuals acknowledged their views may be biased because of their allegiance to and enjoyment of working in their workplaces, but also noted some concerns in relation to professional learning opportunities. Whilst a couple of ECI professionals working for independent providers felt the close-knit teams provided ongoing, consistent and well-supported professional learning (see Chapter Four, page 88), and had chances to be involved in wider ECI community learning events such as MoE initiatives, others mentioned issues. For example, one participant wondered how ECI professionals might learn to coach when centre-based environments differed from community-based ones. She queried whether professional learning materials in coaching would still be relevant; and, how might coaching be applied in their setting (Participant 14). Another, suggested:

> because we're a team of multidisciplinary professionals… there's nothing really formalised….and so trying to get some sort of generic training or the principles that everybody can apply I think is… I just don't think there's very much out there [Participant 5].

Therefore, the perception that the type of coaching learned may not be transferable across disciplines or ECI environments was present.

However (also noted earlier), the vast majority of local ECI services (the 80% provided by the MoE) involve ECI professionals working in the community to provide services in the child and family's natural living environments. This means ECI professionals visiting both homes and EC centres. Overall, most participants perceived coaching to have a role in supporting the inclusion

and participation of children in natural community environments. However, although the majority of participants viewed working with families as a priority, a few shared that the nature of service delivery meant itinerant ECI professionals were "busy" (Participant 13), and had limited amounts of time to carry out their case work (Participant 12). In the words of one participant: "I'm here, there, and everywhere (Participant 10). In addition, face-to-face interactions of families were reported to be limited due to outside factors such as work schedules:

> I keep talking a lot about centres because most of my work is at centres. Sometimes we have whānau that we really hardly see due to nightshift… all sorts of things as you know [Participant 14]

Therefore, the combination of ECI professionals and families who have busy schedules and are time poor has reportedly led to a great deal of their work being carried out in EC centres only, particularly in larger urban areas.

Primary service provision. Some authors have noted that in spite of prevalent research in how inclusion and participation might best be achieved, actualisation in ECE centres has been inconsistent (Foster-Cohen & van Bysterveldt, 2016). A few participants discussed governmental policy initiatives and curriculum documents guiding inclusive practice in mainstream education settings. For example, Success for All: Every school, every child (2010 - 2014), (MoE, 2014); and, Collaboration for Success (MoE, 2011c). Together the initiatives offer a way to empower families and educators who support students every day. It was suggested by one participant that in the compulsory sector at least, the Collaboration for Success initiative would mean the classroom teacher took responsibility for coordination as 'key worker', and have confidence to work independently on the student's individual programme with specialist education personnel offering intermittent facilitative coaching rather than traditional directive supports. It is not known why an ECE example was not shared by this participant, nor why the family were not seen as able key workers for their child in the education environment (MoE, 2011a). However,

the following excerpt serves to explain the differences between support services provided within ECE and the compulsory sector:

> at the moment we have a lead worker in early intervention and if anything the family's the client but when you get to school the teacher is the lead worker under "Collaboration for Success", so the teacher leads the IP and… and the SEA well the special education person is really a specialist in the team so they're not actually the lead worker as such. It's the teacher. So there's quite a shift there. And I think we've got to be really clear in early childhood that we build a relationship between the family and the educator because when they leave early intervention, the educator will be the key person [Participant 1]

Such an approach is representative of a primary service provision model which aligns strongly with a transdisciplinary approach (McWilliam, 2010; Shelden & Rush, 2010).

Not only did the participant see this as setting up school-based inclusive education for failure from the perspective of parents, because limited time resource was available to focus on relationship over and above participation-supporting practices, it was implied that this may encourage a dependency on special education services (see further discussion about disempowerment and dependency on page 81) if further supports were not promoted. For example, families "don't need a person on the end of the phone….you know the nice person that comes and has a cup of tea once a week" (Participant 1), implying they needed a different way of working to enabling active participation of children and families in curriculum, EC centres and communities. In this way, it was suggested coaching was seen as a practice with potential.

However, in contrast, concerns were raised by Participant 5 regarding her perception that coaching and the above primary service provision approach would lead to generic ECI. She stated her concern was:

> that we water down things so much that we lose the point of early intervention…you know intervention is actually intervening and making a difference. I think… how we intervene and how we make the difference is the bit we all grapple with. But…I think everyone agrees that intervention needs to happen. So that will be, as I say, I think that will be the interesting thing in the next five years [Participant 5]

This point will be explored further later in the chapter in relation to the professional role and identity.

The challenge of working in ECE centres. Participants noted a number of difficulties when coaching in the ECE setting. These included the number of cases seen, differences in teacher capacity, and differences between each ECE centre.

Number of children to be seen. Participants described how one of the challenges of community service provision where ECI is delivered in EC centres, was how the "set number of professionals" may not change but the number of children in that area continued to grow (Participant 11). For example, one participant, an emerging EI working in a semi-rural setting, perceived the community-based ECI service delivered in ECE centres in the following way:

> there's five kindergartens and we have got a roll of thirty-nine requiring EI and there's nine other EC providers in [the immediate area] and we get an early interventionist who comes…for one and a half days per week… I'm only saying we've got thirty-nine but that's not talking about how many… [private or NGO or homebased ECE providers]…. [Participant 11]

Here the participant appeared to be questioning whether the service realistically had the capacity to work with this number of children.

In addition, other participants also described centre-based practice as challenging and suggested there was a need for great deal of flexibility, where more than one child might require support in each centre. For example, one participant shared how difficult it was to visit a centre for one child and have to focus on another:

> you go for one child but then it's oh but this ones doing this. I find that quite hard [Participant 9]

and:

> you can turn up on the day and everything's changed and you've got to grab that moment [Participant 9]

Therefore, changes at the centre level relating to staff, the centre environment or other unpredicted factors, could also be an issue. The solution to this was seen to be the ability to be "spontaneous" (Participant 9) and to adapt.

Differences in teacher capacity. Based on their own background in EC, participants were aware of the general challenges of the teaching role, with one describing it as "hard – physically…mentally…and that's what teachers are doing every day" (Participant 10). They also identified coaching as a positive way to support inclusive practice in the ECE environment. However, it was suggested by a few participants that some teachers were not as confident in their ability to set up an environment to meet the needs of all children, due to levels of experience and skill level. For example, one participant described coaching in the ECE setting as follows:

> Coaching practices help us to support the teachers with inclusion of children with special education needs into the preschool programme. Some teachers are very confident to set up an environment which meets the needs of all children, … others, particularly those with less experience, are less confident and skilled. Coaching strategies support the development and implementation of individual plans by helping develop the teacher's skills and confidences. Working with teachers in this way overcomes the barriers to achieving the priorities for the child, ensures interventions are meaningful, achievable and is ecologically responsive (the same applies in the home) [Participant 3]

Furthermore, one participant noted that teachers being "very knowledgeable" (Participant 10) meant that ECI professionals had to work hard to find ways to affirm and work with this knowledge, particularly when all avenues had been investigated around a case. In such circumstances, referral for a consultant such as a psychologist to come in might be encouraged.

Differences between centres. Differences between centres were noted in terms of philosophy and implementation of the curriculum. In addition to teachers, a few participants identified education support workers (ESWs) as potential coachees in the implementation of an inclusive EC centre programme:

> the support workers… coaching's part of their role in the work with the child [Participant 4]

and that they might sometimes work in more than one EC centre. This could mean their work was quite complex, particularly because each has their own philosophy or character:

> supporting those adult relationships more than anything… they've got to go into all these centres, who've all got their own philosophies. So just coaching them, supporting them with that [Participant 4]

A similar situation arose when ECI professionals visited numerous centres resulting in a situation where adaptability was needed. In addition, ESWs employed by hybrid centre *and* community ECI independent providers, may be expected to act as a conduit between service and community, in addition to supporting the child.

Challenges when working with families. General challenges in the family or whānau context in relation to the implementation of coaching were identified by a number of participants, and discussed in Chapter Four as a reason for coaching. These related to the task of fostering family independence, working in a strengths-based manner in spite of the reality of family circumstances, and responding to the diverse cultures of families.

Fostering independence. As discussed in Chapter Four, a key shift in ECI has been away from services that are provider directed with professionals taking on an expert role, to those led by families and EC educators within natural ecologies. In addition, current special education policies now promote success for all regardless of student characteristics and abilities. ECI services had been evaluated as providing a very nice relationship-based service which did not necessarily promote participation of child and family (Participant 1). Participant 1 also suggested the current focus should be on:

> the early intervention people and I think we've done a really bad job of this, needs to be more aware of setting families up to be more independent… cause we've actually set

> families up to fail in lots of ways…kind of made them dependent, and that they're somehow different to the other kids in the classroom. They're not really part of the school, they're part of the special education service. And even teachers talk about your kids those special Ed kids [Participant 1]

Here, Participant 1 outlines the need to promote families' independence as a way of supporting inclusive environments. However, participants noted the differing abilities of families to negotiate the ECI process on behalf of their child. Reasons for this were attributed to both parties in the ECI partnership – families being unsure or unaware of their responsibilities, the presence of too many ECI professionals in some situations, and ECI professionals' interpretation of the needs of the family rather than listening and responding to those reported. For example:

> Some families obviously have the skills to be able to say we want our child to be able to sit at the table and use a fork or whatever. But there's lots of families that don't and then that's where… they don't have confidence in a roomful of six professionals, with that whole kind of professional thing around it [Participant 6]

> And I think that what we've done in early childhood intervention and in our work we give parents the next step from where they are at but it's from where we perceive the parents at [Participant 11]

Therefore, according to participants, both family and professional factors might influence the families' ability to function more independently within the ECI programme.

Another example demonstrating the ECI professional's position and why family empowerment remains elusive in ECI can be found below:

> the one thing across the team and it didn't matter how experienced or non-experienced there were – everybody grappled with that thing of… a parent is an expert of their child. And when we teased it…out sort of thing… I had really experienced practitioners saying to me "oh but they're just too busy, and their child is not their focus and how can they be the expert if they're not even seeing what I'm seeing [Participant 5]

The report of such a judgement being made about a parent, shows the dynamics evident in ECI within parent-professional relationships, and demonstrates an imbalance in power. The participant described this type of dynamic as a motivator for the implementation of both collaborative and family-centred approaches, and the practice of coaching in particular.

Recognition of strengths in families' realities. Factors known to influence the experience of disability worldwide are also influential in Aotearoa New Zealand. A number of participants spoke of stress, trauma, parental mental health, and economic factors impacting family circumstances, including basic daily living needs. It was noted that some families were 'hard[er] to reach' (e.g. Participant 2). Within this context, where families' realities were noted to be significantly challenging, participants saw the importance of ECI professionals being able to use coaching as a strengths-based tool to identify what was working well, in order to identify goals (though for "some people it's hard to pin down goals" (Participant 8)) and build on a family's current capacities:

> for some families it might be minimal but if we understand…how maybe…what those one or two strengths are we can build our conversation and our work from that. And yes it's going to take us longer and…we're going to be involved more as the work progresses but actually that's about responding with a very broad approach to what it is that you can do [Participant 3]

The notion that some families' current capacity to support their child's learning was limited was evident in the data, but in this case the participant's judgement was reserved, and her description showed a belief that each family possessed at least some knowledge and skills about their child and situation, providing the base to develop their plan forward.

Responding to cultural diversity. A few participants acknowledged the challenge of responding to cultural diversity in the ECI setting. For example, two suggested that working with families who were not of the same ethnicity or culture as themselves involved more thought and care (Participants 8 & 9). In the words of Participant 8:

> some people have really different ideas about raising children… people are raised in different ways and from different backgrounds and that is sometimes at odds with the style or approach that I might use….and that can be tricky [Participant 8]

This participant worked in a densely and diversely populated area, with a range of families, some of whom were of a different ethnicity and culture. Her self-awareness about difference and her response to this in her everyday practice was noted. Another participant specifically reported these differences to be in "parental expectations" and "the variance between what I [the ECI professional] saw and what the parents saw" (Participant 14). There was also a comment made that non-Eurocentric staff were already aware that Eurocentric staff "telling people [families of other cultures] what to do" was "not the way to do it [ECI practice]" (Participant 2).

More directly related to the implementation of coaching, was the idea that families' expectations about professional input may differ "for… families where parenting and teaching are seen as quite different" (Participant 1). For example, families might expect the teacher to be responsible for the child's learning rather than the family. With a history of working with families in this way, experienced ECI professionals could find application of coaching difficult:

> …I think we still get practitioners who don't necessarily have an understanding … believing…to think that they …the parent had it in them and use their everyday activities… using what already exists [Participant 11]

Therefore a lack of professional belief that the parent or family member was capable of a) supporting their child, and b) determining their child and family's ECI pathway, was suggested to contribute to the challenge of responding to diversity.

6.2.2 Challenges with the practice of coaching. Participants identified two main issues to do with coaching as a practice. These were about taking on a coaching position, and applying theoretical coaching knowledge in practice.

Taking on a coaching position. Taking on a coaching position requires the ECI professional to understand what coaching is from a philosophical point of view, and to work in accordance with this position in professional practice. Three main issues were raised in relation

to taking on a coaching position. Firstly, it was noted that even the name "coaching" was problematic, "cause coaching sounds more directed than it is" (Participant 12). Secondly, it was identified that taking on the humanistic attitude of 'believing in the other' at all times (with the 'other' meaning the coachee), could be fundamentally challenging:

> There are very personal challenges to getting to a place that is required for coaching to work, that thing of needing to believe that all families are capable and competent - which is a required component. [Participant 2]
>
> Because it's easy to say, you believe that all families are capable… but it's another thing to practice like you do [Participant 1]

So although participants saw the need for coachees to be viewed as capable, they also noted that an attitudinal shift was required, because historically it was the expert or professional working directly with child who was viewed as holding the capability. In addition, the difference between holding a belief and practising based on this belief was pointed out (embodiment of the philosophy). This is discussed in more detail below.

Thirdly, participants noted the challenge of esteeming the coaching relationship above all else, which required efforts to avoid reverting to more directive methods where power dynamics ensue:

> Choosing relationship over control is another element which can be a huge change that requires some very deep work [Participant 2]

Findings which outline factors relating to coaching as a relationship-based practice were discussed in Chapter Five - *What understandings of coaching do ECI professionals have*, so will not be covered again in this chapter. However, generally speaking, data again emphasised an attitudinal shift was required to see the relationship as a priority, and that this would involve reflective work.

Application of theory in practice. Another challenge with coaching relates to its application in practice. One-third of all participants specifically identified the challenge of

putting newly attained theoretical knowledge of coaching into practice; and there was acknowledgement that this is usually the case when applying new practices. Difficulty with implementation due to attitudinal positions may affect this (as discussed above), but the participants also talked about concerns in bridging the theory to practice gap, especially in relation to the coaching strategy of questioning (see below).

Multiple examples of participants discussing challenges of applying theoretical knowledge of coaching in practice were evident in the data. Implementation was viewed as problematic on occasion and not universally apparent for all ECI professionals. See the following excerpts:

> it's the practise… practising to show that you're doing it that trips people up [Participant 1]
>
> in terms of… coaching, the practical side of it - I probably felt a little bit frustrated sometimes [Participant 11]
>
> whether I could put my hand on my heart and say we do this all the time and every member of our team does it… [Participant 5]
>
> I see it as really critical that we get really good at it and I see it as a huge challenge, because what I observe is people getting a good understanding of the tools in the Shelden and Rush model, but some of the implementation can be a challenge in some situations…. just going to a workshop and then trying some stuff in your practice is not going to work. The shift will require a very deep level of analysis and support to challenge yourself. [Participant 2]

Concerns about implementing specific models, approaches or strategies were also present:

> … I tried to implement GROW but I find acronyms in your head and trying to do it, quite tricky [Participant 2]
>
> And so the thing that I struggle with is ahh - is where to pitch that conversation? If it's coming from me um well no, it's not coming from me cause they've already said what they found difficult. So sometimes I can see maybe where it needs to go… but if I come in, you know, do I do the funnel? I'll start up here – when I know I haven't got time but do I come in here more… and so should I have started it here? Explored more realities? [Participant 9]

While a more detailed summary of participants' understandings of coaching models has been presented in Chapter Five, here the implication of holding different understandings is presented as challenging.

A number of participants perceived that putting theory into practice was about making it natural or integrating it into the conversation with the coachee. This required in the moment reflection or in the words of Participant 15 "the ability to think on one's feet"; and, to spontaneously adjust coaching strategies in the moment, involving flexibility and avoiding taking an agenda into the interaction (Participant 9). Sticking points in the practical application of coaching reported by participants showed they had trialled the practice in person. It also indicated an ability to reflect on their professional practice.

However, limited professional reflection was specifically mentioned as an overall challenge in applying coaching in practice by a couple of participants. For example, from the perspective of Participant 1:

> people…who are quite entrenched and who've got the best intentions but don't necessarily take the time to step back… look at how they do things [Participant 1]

As reflective practice is a focus in ECE and ECI settings, it was unsurprising these participants mentioned reflection as a way of supporting experimentation and adoption of new practices such as coaching.

The challenge of implementing questioning as a coaching strategy. Three participants explicitly stated their difficulties in implementing the coaching strategy of *questioning*. No other specific strategy was mentioned by participants as being an issue, however, this did not mean they had not been trialled. As discussed in Chapter Five, data analysis suggested participants knew the importance of questioning in a coaching approach, however, using it to help the parent (or educator) uncover their own knowledge posed some challenges:

> so I think that's the trickiest part of it is being able to question well so the parent has insight into what they know. So, they then can plan on what they need to do next [Participant 1]

> So I might need to do a back step. Try to let the coachee raise those concerns and then go into that….before I used to overthink about quest…how many open questions you know I used before giving some information. Ahh you know there's, it's so intense with all the different types of questioning – awareness, analysis, action, um there's another one as well [from Rush & Shelden's EC coaching]. And then whether that's related to the, to the um, to their reality, or to their action, or their knowledge and strategies… it's knowing which one to pluck to use for this [Participant 9]

Participants had also self-evaluated their own competence in the use of questioning:

> recognising where you've got some areas to develop like I said with the questioning [Participant 11]

It is possible other coaching strategies had been utilised but had been less difficult to use due to their similarity to current ECI practice. Examples of these practices could include building rapport when establishing the relationship, or active listening.

6.2.3 Challenges with the professional learning context. Findings from participant data indicated multiple areas of challenge in the professional learning (in coaching) context. Main issues were organisational factors, resources, and professional learning design.

Organisational factors. Organisational challenges were mentioned by three participants. These concerned 1) the level of support from leaders and management "I got a general thing back from managers, you know what's the time for this, and how much" (reference purposely omitted) and, 2) what was offered within the organisation in terms of professional learning structures, type of service delivery, and team makeup. In the following example, the restructuring of team configurations seems to have impacted implementation of ECI processes:

> the change for us in teams as well…because initially we were an early intervention team…Now that we're not and we're 'birth to 21' [type of service delivery team] and

> there's a lot of people that have come in to early intervention … They have to do work in early intervention with probably not a lot of background [Participant 7]

Specifically, the data explain how team makeup had affected the applicability, reception and use of professional learning in the workplace.

In addition, the distribution of service delivery centres across the geographic regions was also reported as having an impact, with those spread across greater areas needing creative solutions to deliver enough supports. In one region the practice advisor travelled out to the districts to meet with ECI professionals whilst also keeping in contact in between times via email, phone and video conferencing. Conversely, another ECI professional had had little face-to-face professional learning support which she suggested had limited her learning.

Resources. Participants discussed the challenges with resources that supported professional learning in coaching. These related to funding, personnel, and time / overload factors.

Financial challenges. The financial cost of professional learning was noted by those participants who had insight into budgets and planning. The cost of employing the services of a mentor coach per day by a service provider was mentioned and it was implied that further expenditure for the involvement of this person beyond what had been organised, was unlikely due to the figure. Specifically it was suggested any professional learning in coaching needed to be actioned internally:

> from a resourcing point of view we don't have the dollars to get these people in to do it [Participant 1]

For the majority of participants, it appeared attendance at external formal professional learning events was funded by ECI organisations.

People resources. Another reason that internal personnel may be more suitable to lead professional learning was noted by Participant 1 when she shared about the involvement of an outsider. In short, there were concerns regarding the lack of background in ECE and ECI:

> I looked at her proposal… and my feedback was - it would be really important that this person who's not from an education background, or early childhood, or early intervention, is really familiar with the material that's already been delivered so that it's relevant to the context that we work in [Participant 1]

A possible solution was suggested by Participant 2, where a small group of ECI professionals who had taken up coaching to a greater extent might be able to support others to learn more about the practice. This method had worked for professional learning in routines-based interviewing.

> I guess having people that are skilled at coaching and this is why it's quite hard to implement, a huge change across a whole workforce, is that we haven't got people necessarily, got people that are really skilled at it, that are able to model it for others; everybody is still learning, so that's a challenge. Um but then there's some people that have taken to it more than others so I guess we just give them opportunities to lead, and to help. [Participant 2]

Also evident in the excerpt, is that too few ECI professionals were knowledgeable or skilled enough to support their peers in learning more about coaching. However, as discussed in Chapter Four section 4.2.1, cross-pollination of coaching ideas was happening on occasion though spontaneously and in an ad hoc fashion, across teams and disciplines.

Whilst support from peers within the organisation was likely to occur in small group situations, other types of professional learning materials requiring personnel expertise through the development stage were discussed. In particular, it was explained how online materials such as videos had been suggested by an IT specialist:

> the IT person…who's very enthusiastic and gets very frustrated by us … she said to me why don't you do a PD on line coaching package and interview people and she showed me how to do that and get people who were early adopters… and get them to talk …and put all your content on. She talked about online learning and what it needs to look like

> and we have very little on there and all the rest of it, and that was a great idea, but that's a full time job [Participant 1]

Although the person making the suggestion had clear ideas about how it could work, it seemed the task at present was perceived as too challenging. A further drawback was that it would take time. Further difficulties relating to time will be discussed in the next section.

Time as a resource. Half of participants considered the resource of time to be an issue in the professional learning context. There was suggestion the task was enormous (Participant 1), and that time was pressured both in the field and within the training context. For example, participants described being time - 'limited' or 'pressed' or things being 'time-consuming' (Participants 11, 12, 13). Data suggested this issue was confounded by the notion that putting coaching into practice as part of professional learning, took time – time that was already scarce or pressured:

> It's just really frustrating knowing that you've got to wait that time…to get that ground swell…to do it well [Participant 1]
>
> shifting [to a coaching approach]…takes quite a long time [Participant 2]

Time was also discussed as a commodity when some participants shared their observations and experiences of professional and professional / personal overload in relation to the uptake of new practices. For example, there was acknowledgement by a few participants of the need to take into account the demands placed on professionals as a whole, including their work-life, or in the case of those in training, work-study-life balance. This was discussed from a personal perspective "because I was kind of snowed under with everything" [Participant 15] and, from the perspective of colleagues: "I'm always mindful of the demands that are on practitioners" [Participant 3]. In particular, the need to take ECI professionals' conflicting demands into account were noted by those with responsibility for planning of collective professional learning activities.

Solutions to address the issue of professional overload were offered by at least two participants. For example, one suggested colleagues could improve their own organisation to avoid experiencing a sense of overload:

> we get this message from practitioners all the time that they're overloaded, so we've gotta be really careful about overloading people… even though we see that they could become more organised in their work [Participant 1]

Participant 3 similarly suggested ECI professionals in the field could be proactive in addressing concerns about having enough time:

> So the protected time if you like is a skill that a practitioner needs to have in their practice. So, it's about good techniques of organising your week, and I would like to think that our practitioners put time aside with supervision for example, time aside to talk with their service manager about key issues and concerns around their own health and safety things and that and time for their own reading. Now that might be an hour for some people, it might be half for some people; it may not exist for others. But one of the ways to be successful in this role and is to be able to manage your case work and to manage your own professional abilities to be the best that you can. Um, and so for me, I think about doing that and having flexibility in my diary, so that if something urgent does come in I've got the flexibility to do that. And I've got time when I am doing my admin work and you know ah this, the kinds of things that we're sending out are fifteen minute reads or a five minute clip [Participant 3]

A differing perspective was noted however, by another participant who reported having emergent coaching skills. She indicated she had "learned more in this hour about coaching than [she] knew" in relation to the discussion about coaching material following the formal research interview. Firstly, this demonstrated that professionals learn in different ways; and, secondly, that some compact units of information can be adequately imparted in a short space in time in a one-to-one situation. But it also showed that professional learning in coaching may have been regionally differentiated, and that some more isolated areas may have less exposure to key trainings or supportive professional learning exercises. Although some professional learning occurs online through accessible resources and practice guides, this is not always utilised by ECI professionals who are busy or do not have adequate face-to-face support.

Challenges with professional learning content and design. A number of issues with professional learning design were mentioned by participants. These included the need for more than just workshops and opportunities for practise of coaching, and reflection. In addition, challenges in self-directed learning, the cultural applicability of professional learning materials, and information overload were identified.

More than just workshops. There was strong suggestion that structured face-to-face delivery was required initially, especially in the presentation of theoretical material. However, most participants saw workshops as just a part of professional learning and that they were inadequate in isolation. For example:

> one workshop on coaching hasn't cut it I don't think [Participant 1]

> it's not as simple as going to a workshop and then off you go [Participant 2]

Limited practical application. Participants perceived opportunity to practise coaching as important either hypothetically in role-plays or around case work - "you want that hands on", in order to adapt it to one's own style (Participant 4). Participant 1 described how a lack of opportunity for practical application in professional learning activities may lead to people that know about coaching, but cannot 'do' it:

> I think if you haven't got that part in your PD or whatever you are doing around it then you…….get all these experts who can't do it. [Participant 1]

Participant 6 similarly discussed the challenge of needing to practise new coaching skills:

> because I think you can talk it but you need to practise the skill. It's actually quite hard…[Participant 6]

One participant noted that regardless of progress toward putting coaching in practice, a reversion to default methods of practice was common:

> I'm always slipping. I'm not there yet, by any means [Participant 2]

As an ECI professional who had trained in an expert teaching model, this excerpt reflects the fact that her practice had at some time been required to change, and that a coaching approach did not come naturally to her. Participant 4 agreed that unless an ECI professional was practising coaching every day it was unlikely to stick:

> I think we were sent some emails with some links to some readings and things like that. But I think what I've found is unless it's something that you're going to use every day and it's right there available to you, you file it as PD you've done and then carry on and yeah it's very easy to just keep doing what you're doing [Participant 4]

Even with resources and reminders, it depended on the personal disposition of the ECI professional as to whether they took this written theoretical material and used it to support their application of coaching in practice, in the field. Interestingly, from Participant 4's perspective, older practices were currently being continued because they were 'easier' to maintain, rather than because they were in alignment with current policy or practice guidelines, or deemed to be evidence-based.

In some cases, missed opportunities were the reason for lack of practical experience of coaching. For example:

> one of the goals is to see some coaching in action but that just never happened for various reasons… [Participant 13]

This was discussed especially by those participants who had previously had little exposure to ECI practice and were involved in the Specialist Teaching practicum.

Limited reflection. As a critical component in self-improving practice, the impact of limited opportunity for reflection can slow implementation in practice. For example, ECI professionals can have experience and good intentions but need to gain insight (Participant 1). One way of enhancing self-awareness was reported to be video feedback, which appeared to have been used to good effect professional learning in routines-based interviewing (e.g. Participant 8). Reflection also requires space and time. As discussed on pages 189-190 of this chapter, this is somewhat difficult with the time pressures and professional overload that are evidently present.

Challenges in self-directed learning. Participants' self-directed learning took on a number of different forms and appeared to be a valuable exercise. Key issues lay in being able to ask for or access appropriate learning opportunities, being viewed as competent when one was not feeling confident, and in the need to interdependently collaborate to enhance learning.

ECI professionals in training or new to the role suggested they felt less able to self-direct their learning by asking for what they wanted from professional learning opportunities in the field. In some cases, this was not perceived to be an issue due to the fact all experiences on practicum placement were felt to be meaningful and linked directly to case work. But in other situations, participants felt disempowered by their circumstance – for example, where 'taking what professional learning one could get' was the status quo, even in a situation where self-directed learning had been requested. Participant 13 found a way to ask for access to specific professional learning opportunities:

> I just thought okay if I want to know about it I've got to really push to find out about it so I just did… I just said can we meet to look at this…So I felt I was driving it [Participant 13]

In addition, two of the three participants whose main opportunity to see coaching in action between ECI professionals and families of educators was during Specialist Teaching practicum

(as they were currently working in ECE) said it was difficult when one was perceived as competent and not requiring extra support or training in the ECI role. For example:

> so I think they think I'm capable of doing it all myself and I've had to remind them that I'm not capable that I'm on the inside and I'm not an EIT, I've got a teacher …child parent relationship with them and I can't move into that EIT role and when I said that to them, they were all like: oh no, of course you can't but I'm like thinking… well it kind of feels like you're treating me that way [Participant 12]

The ECI professionals felt uncomfortable when they were perceived as capable by another person, when they did not feel confident about their ability to be involved in ECI practice.

Furthermore, both emerging and experienced professionals in the field noted there was a point in their self-directed learning where it was necessary to seek collaborative support:

> then the second half of my practicum I was very much you know go and visit - you're fine to go and do your own thing so I kind of was oh we still need to talk… I still need to talk to you guys about this, it was it was a little bit I found it a little bit bizarre cause it was almost like in one way I kind of felt like they thought that I was quite capable and so if I'd go somewhere with someone they'd go oh you're fine and id go well yeah but I'm still – I'm on practicum I'm learning like I'm learning off you guys, but they kind of had this mentality that oh you don't have a problem with that but I was thinking well no not in this kind of context but I actually want to learn about this, this, and this and so… [Participant 13]

It seems even when directing one's own learning, there is an expectation and need from the ECI professional as learner, for some sort of collaborative support from colleagues or field advisors.

Complexities also arose when the professionals who participants collaborated with were not a fellow ECI professional, especially when "going into families fresh" as an emerging ECI professional [Participant 12], or when teaming in district birth to twenty-one year old teams where specialist ECI skills were difficult to develop because only non-ECI professionals were present. This did not necessarily mean professionals from other disciplines who worked in ECI did not know how to coach, as participants who had collaborated with other disciplined

professionals had also observed good examples of coaching first-hand through observation or being involved [e.g. Participant 15]

Cultural applicability of professional learning content. Two participants discussed the cultural applicability of available professional learning materials in coaching. In particular, concerns were raised about the 'Americanisation' of these:

> The thing that I find challenging about all this literature though is that because it comes from America… it's only focused on nought to three and mostly we work with three and four year olds, so that is a problem right there and their early childhood service is coming from a completely different place than ours [Participant 2]

> the actual examples you wouldn't talk… I mean I've done it straight out of the book and it's been good for a laugh, and we've talked about that it's in Americanised way, but it definitely needs re-writing [Participant 1]

Possible solutions to this were discussed also:

> the language would need to be changed. But the key principles of the…um… would be fine… this is where this is no good… I actually did it by hand. When I do the um training, I get somebody to sit with me, and we have… we do this… we do a consultation conversation… and then we do coaching. So I re-wrote them, from a New Zealand… and I didn't get it all put together in time to… but that's what needs….and it's things like that, to sit down and write a dialogue, it's like a… it would be great to have a New Zealand version [Participant 1]

Information overload. A pattern emerged in relation to three participants who had experienced professional learning in coaching as part of the Specialist Teaching programme. Due to the nature of the programme, they mentioned an issue impacting learning to do with the overloading of information. Specifically, the volume of available research and practice information was viewed as vast, through both the programme website and on the internet itself. All courses were designed with elements of choice incorporated into them, and although coaching material was streamlined, there was also room for students to access in a self-directed manner. One participant reported that the volume of available information contributed to the "lack of understanding [of] what coaching really looks like" (Participant 12). Participants saw

this as the result of struggling to remember what they had engaged with and learned about; and being able to identify where exactly they had accessed the information in the first place. In two interviews, participants indicated a merging or converging of information occurring in their mind, which led to their unsureness or not knowing (this relates to feelings of confusion discussed below on page 198).

A final point made by one participant was the concern of deciding which information was the best to focus on in terms of accuracy or quality:

> when I was looking for my articles, I only want to pick four, which four do I pick. It's… there's… so much information out there and what is the best ones? Because even in our course, there was quite… I remember there being a lot of articles on it [Participant 12]

The challenges raised in this information overload subsection may have less to do with the design of professional learning in coaching, and more to do with the overall model of the professional learning programme, where a blend of both structured and unstructured learning took place. This included participants being encouraged to use a smorgasbord approach to accessing resources for self-directed learning (see Chapter Four page 89), picking and choosing materials and assessment options as they appealed. The data identified that an interactional practice like coaching may have been taught in more effective ways.

6.2.4 Challenges for the professional and their practice. Participants also raised four main challenges with putting coaching in practice relating to their own roles as ECI professionals. These were concerns about the changing roles and responsibilities, trusting the effectiveness of coaching, feelings of uncertainty and confusion through the uptake of the new practice, and, challenges to the professional identity.

Changing roles and responsibilities. Data revealed there to be some challenges associated with the changing roles and responsibilities when individuals and organisations shift

to a coaching approach. These related to the expectations of the coach (or ECI professional) and the coachees (parents, family members, teachers or support workers). For example, not only did participants perceive the ECI professional's role and associated responsibilities were set to change with a coaching approach:

> our role as an EI or speechie is changing [Participant 11],

they were also cognisant of the impact this would have on coachees. In particular, families:

> they [the parent] tended to still have an idea that I was there to do the work with the child [Participant 8]
>
> So you can see how it would be for families who are saying "just give me the answers, give me the answers" but again you know it is about… raising their level of confidence in themselves
>
> historically the people like to think that somebody else is going to come in and fix the problem. And it can be quite unsettling to know that nobody's going to do that. [Participant 1] [referring to parents]
>
> sometimes parents say what should I do like a little bit like tell me what I should do. [Participant 13]

and on the roles of EC educators:

> more and more teachers in early childhood centres are going to be expected to know everything and be coached by….. [ECI professionals and others]… I guess it's the thing that concerns me a little bit and why…I think we're gonna have to know our stuff pretty well…there's quite a lot of resistance from teachers in the association – not even in the association just in general that this is just more work that they have to do in a limited time frame [Participant 11]

In each case it appeared that establishing roles and responsibilities early in the coaching process would be of benefit. However, there appeared to be some confusion about who might best share this information and negotiate these roles:

> practitioners at the moment shouldn't have full responsibility to get that across to teachers. They should arrive at a centre with those centres already knowing how they work. So there's no surprises [Participant1]

From this participant's perspective, there appeared to be some hope that wider distribution of coaching information to EC centres would occur, laying a foundation for later conversations with centres and families when negotiating the coaching relationship in person.

Trusting the new practice. Although a few participants gave subjective and objective accounts of coaching's effectiveness 'I think it's a really good tool', 'I really love this theory it's so great' (Participant 12), 'I've found it works really well' (Participant 13); others alluded to the fact that ECI professionals may not trust the efficacy and effectiveness of coaching, thus were unconvinced of its place in ECI. Although this provides evidence ECI professionals are keen to provide a quality and evidence-based service, such a perception may lead to reduced motivation to learn more about and implement the practice in the field. Data suggested perceptions such as this appear in the initial stages of being exposed to the idea of a new practice (Participants 1 & 4). For example:

> I did a course at the start of last year through work and I wasn't quite convinced…we all came out thinking that's was really nice it was almost like a personal one oh that would help me in my personal life but not sure it would help us in practice. [Participant 4]

This fits with the idea that Participant 1 shared about needing key personnel to be credible (page 91) in order for ECI professionals to take on board key ideas about a practice early in the implementation process, especially in cases where a practice may be viewed as driven by resourcing as much as by pedagogy.

Feelings of uncertainty, discomfort, and confusion. Data demonstrated that the professional learning experience may lead to ECI professionals having a sense of uncertainty, discomfort, and confusion**.**

> I kind of understand it but I don't know [Participant 2]

> I just felt like such a wally… and I remember…thinking oh everyone's thinking how did this person get a job as an EIT [Participant 15 (in response to a role play where she felt out of her depth)]

> oh I dunno maybe I'm in two minds about it actually. I've realised that I'm quite confused [Participant 2]

Learning to coach may challenge professional identity. One-third of participants mentioned another key barrier to applying coaching in practice. Specifically, they perceived the practice of coaching challenged their professional identity and in some instances this posed an ethical dilemma. Participant 8 shared about her team and colleagues – "We go in to observe and assess, we have got to know information" – but from her perspective, a coaching or routines-based interview approach requires the ECI professional to hold back, ask questions sparingly and support the coachee to problem solve, which results in a professional quandary. For example, the professional may ask themselves:

> why am I here with my skills and knowledge? Am I just here to…. How can I not contribute all this other stuff?' [Participant 8]

This apparent reticence to change from an *expert* to a *coaching* approach can be seen as a key attitudinal challenge in the implementation of coaching. Facilitating the required attitudinal shift may be difficult where espoused and embodied approaches to practice differ (for example, where professionals' self-awareness is poor, or where they believe they are coaching when they are actually still practising from an expert perspective). Additionally, a shift may be challenging where working in a particular way offers the ECI professional internal reward. For example, Participant 2 shared:

> some take to it easily but for some that's just such a change to their fundamental how they see themselves as a professional. Even though it matches with their core values about empowerment and family-centred and leaving more than what you…it also cuts across their feelings about getting…rewards from the work… from feeling like you knew what to say when.. …and being knowledgeable and skilled yeah… you kind of have to kind of

> leave that at the door. That's hard, we all find that really difficult…..yeah, yeah, if that's how you've sort of seen, got your rewards in your work then shifting that's quite hard [Participant 2]

Participants 2 and 13 offered similar explanations about how they reconciled holding specialist knowledge whilst also fulfilling coaching's aim to take perspectives, be mutually empowered and to co-construct goals and strategies with families and professionals:

> I think there's always that knowledge base and experience that's always sitting there…as an EI that's always there underpinning everything …..So in terms of expertise I feel that's nicely placed but again it's using that and the way that's coming out when you're working with a family that's how I'd look at it as opposed to this is a better way than what you're doing [Participant 13]

> it's about using that specialist knowledge that you bring to the relationship. You can't ignore that you have… But…you're not trying to manipulate someone into thinking the way you do. You have to co-construct that together. I don't know if they use that word, but that's what I take it to mean…It's that if you've got an agenda to try to understand something you're on the wrong path [Participant 2]

Differing slightly in viewpoint, Participant 1 suggested a hybrid approach where coaching included developmental knowledge of the ECI professional which could be valuable when asking specific coaching questions in line with a developmental sequence, even when identified through an ecological assessment tool – for example, if a parent says the child has gone out the door and into the car, then asking how did he get in the car, or how did he move down the stairs, would be appropriate. However, no other participant referred to the integration of developmental knowledge to ask specific coaching questions.

Key findings of this chapter will now be discussed in relation to relevant research. For clarity, this discussion will be organised using the same foci and similar headings as those of the findings.

6.3 Discussion of Findings about Implementation of Coaching

This section discusses findings in light of literature around the challenges inherent in implementing coaching in practice in the ECI setting in relation to professional learning. The

first section discusses findings related to the implementation of coaching in practice that had occurred. The second section is divided into four main parts which align with the main areas of challenge identified in the data. The first of these is the ECI context; the second, the practice of coaching; the third, the professional learning context; and finally, the professional and their practice.

6.3.1 Discussion about implementation of coaching in practice. In the current study participants had learned about coaching to varying degrees from the professional learning they had undertaken. Experiences of coaching were integrated into a set activity, organised by the ECI professional themselves as part of an administered or self-directed curriculum (formal learning), or arose unplanned in an ad hoc way in the workplace. These findings are generally compatible with Evans (2019), Marsick et al. (2009), and Segers et al. (2018) who discuss different types of workplace learning, particularly informal and incidental.

However, study findings suggested application of coaching theory in practice was restricted. Most participants openly disclosed their limited coaching knowledge and experience. Bloom's taxonomy suggests application of theory is an integral step to enhancing knowledge (Bloom et al., 1984; Krathwohl, 2002). In professional practice training, experiential learning is critical to ensure practices and their place in the workplace are practically and rationally understood (Yardley, Teunissen, Dornan, 2012). Therefore, participants' lack of concrete practice was likely to have impacted their working understandings of coaching.

Indeed, most participants self-identified as having emergent or learner coaching skills only. This could be because participants might *consistently* view themselves as learners, where a growth mind-set is held (Dweck, 2006). This predominant attitude taken by professionals, involves being resilient to set-backs and open to new learning across time. However, participants identifying themselves as learners also aligns strongly with the level of conscious incompetence from

Broadwell's four-part categorisation of competence and awareness, which is frequently discussed in professional learning settings (Broadwell, 1969). Conscious incompetence is the second of the four category levels depicting a situation where professionals are unskilled but well aware of what they do and do not know and are therefore willing to seek help and find ways to improve. This could also explain why limited coaching had taken place with families, with participants not prepared to take the risk of utilising a practice in which they self-acknowledged incompetence, especially given the need to practice ethically. Specifically, they were waiting until they felt both competent and confident to appropriately implement the practice with families, educators, and colleagues.

However, apparent reticence to implement coaching because of perceived level of competence contests practice literature which encourages both coaches and coachees to be responsible for their own roles in the coaching process, with negotiation of these taking place prior to embarking on a coaching programme (ICF, 2008; Utah Office of Childcare, 2014). Thus, coaching carried out by beginner coaches would be acceptable where guidelines were followed and there was presence of background support from a mentor coach. In the current study it seems many ECI professionals preferred to have a certain level of competence and confidence in coaching *prior* to using it 'for real', to ensure no harm resulted from their efforts. This finding challenges the idea that each person holds expert knowledge in their own right, and that a coaching process does not require the coach to hold ultimate power in the coaching relationship. If study participants had fully understood and accepted coaching, such reluctance to implement may not exist.

The role of reflection and having a sense of awareness around development of professional practice is regarded as essential in health, education and social development disciplines (Coward, 2018; Schön, 1987, 1991). In congruence, current participants demonstrated the ability to be

reflective about their own practice and indicated they were aware of new coaching experiences and were making sense of these. Some key changes toward a coaching approach were noted.

Participants in the current study reported increases in questioning had occurred alongside more listening and less advising. It is not known whether the coaching strategies reported closely represented those already in use, making them easier to assimilate; or, whether they were the 'most different' from those in current practice, meaning dissonance had occurred (Jones, 2018) However, **t**his finding makes good practical sense given that questioning requires the coach to listen for the coachee's response; and, that some participants had experienced professional learning in these strategies. Salisbury et al. (2012) found discrepancies in actual and reported use of coaching behaviours sometimes occur suggesting participants' use of questioning may have been more than reported. However, in contrast, Jayaraman et al. (2015) found even where questioning had been a focus of professional learning, it was observed less frequently than other coaching behaviours in videotaped EC coaching conversations. Current findings compliment existent research which evaluates application of coaching strategies through coding of video-recordings. It also extends research using survey or guided interview methods, by further explaining the coach's experience of applying questioning.

6.3.2 Discussion regarding challenges with implementation of coaching.

The ECI context. As outlined in the findings section four main areas of challenge were found in the ECI context. These were 1) differing philosophical positions, 2) service delivery approaches, 3) working in EC centres, and 4) working with families. These findings areas will now be discussed.

1. ECI is cross-sectoral and multi-layered (HarvardEducation, 2009, November 13), and there is diversity in professional, cultural and personal characteristics of professionals, resulting

in services that are delivered from heterogeneous philosophies. The current study revealed that differing philosophical positions from which disciplines practice result in conflicting undercurrents in the ECI environment. Local literature has previously noted the existent tensions in EC and compulsory sector settings, between medical models utilising deficit-thinking, and developmental, and sociocultural perspectives (Caulcutt & Paki, 2011; Fraser et al., 2005; Macartney & Morton, 2013). Conflict between these approaches was also evident in the current findings.

In relation to the above finding about conflicting philosophical positions, the socio-culturally based Kei Tua o te Pae assessment for learning resource outlines how all those in the "child's learning community" including "the children themselves, their families and whānau, their teachers" and ECI professionals, "speak *different languages* and may use a different *lens* to plan for and assess a child's learning" (MoE, 2005, p. 2). For this consideration of multiple perspectives to occur, highly effective communication needs to take place (Dunn & Barry, 2004), and EC educators and ECI professionals need to value parental input rather than take full responsibility for processes and outcomes in ECI collaboration (Dunn, 2008). As a conversational tool based in the relationship, coaching could also be an effective way to support communication between the adults around the child in ECI settings who hold differing philosophies. Examples of this were also revealed in Chapter Four on page 99 and Chapter Five on page 159 where coaching was seen as a useful tool to support discussions between colleagues (e.g. a speech language therapist and an early intervention teacher), and in a management setting between leaders and EC educators.

2. As discussed in Chapter Four in relation to background and training of ECI professionals, all those working for governmental and independent ECI providers reported participation in regular professional learning. However, in the current study some ECI

professionals working for independent ECI providers delivering centred-based and itinerant in-community services identified challenges in accessing professional learning in coaching. Although some participants had undertaken comprehensive in-house professional learning in practices such as McWilliam's routine-based interview, and theoretical foundations of coaching such as family-centred practice, issues with access to appropriate formal courses were present. In terms of access, independent ECI providers appeared to be reliant on individual professionals' self-directed efforts, the sharing between peers at group meetings (especially where a team member was carrying out study or had attended a course), and personal connection to those with coaching knowledge leading to invitation to speak to the team as guest speaker. This reliance on the individual and personal relationships appears to be foundational in independent ECI service provision (Blackburn, 2016), and is in keeping with a sociocultural approach.

In addition, there were concerns that because independent provider ECI teams were cross-disciplinary, coaching materials that had been introduced may not apply to all staff. As stated in the introduction and throughout this thesis, the Early Intervention Practice Framework (MoE, 2011a) advocates for a coaching approach in line with having a teaming focus. With widespread application across health and education disciplines, it is likely professional learning materials in coaching would be appropriate for use by a range of ECI professionals, other than the early intervention teacher. However, when this study was carried out no recommended guidelines and limited specified professional learning programmes in coaching in ECI existed in the local setting.

It was also noted in the data that coaching aligns with a primary service provision model, in which a transdisciplinary type of teaming was used. This is a model discussed in the online source http://www.coachinginearlychildhood.org/pcateaming.php and by Shelden and Rush (2010). A transdisciplinary approach is also one of the teaming options mentioned in the Early Intervention

Practice Framework (MoE, 2011a), though its link to coaching is not emphasised in this document. In the current study, the description by one participant in particular showed how a primary service provision model might look in a school sector rather than in ECI, and how it aligned with the practice of coaching.

3. Participant data indicated there were issues with the large number of children and families that needed ECI services. Caseload sizes have been identified as a factor influencing ECI service provision both overseas and in Aotearoa New Zealand. Smaller caseloads are believed to allow optimal delivery of collaborative ECI services (Dinnebeil, Hale, & Rule, 1996). Despite increases in funding in Aotearoa New Zealand, ECI waitlists have meant many families across regions have waited long periods for children to be assessed (Davison, 2019; Long, 2019; Redmond, 2018). In addition, the National government initiative to have 98% of 3-5 year olds enrolled in ECE (Mitchell et al., 2013) may have inadvertently resulted in more referrals for specialised ECI services, however, it is just as likely the predicted increase in need for ECE service is due to environmental and family factors as discussed by Liberty (2014). Current findings support this literature, but also offer further insights into the issues of caseload, including the unique challenges present in rural and semi-rural areas. One participant mentioned the 3-4 monthly contact children and families and centres were currently getting from their service provider due to geographic distance.

The current study's participants acknowledged the challenge of working with EC teachers and their ranging abilities to come up with solutions to embed the child's programme into daily routines and activities, and to adequately adapt the learning environment to encourage full participation of all children and families. As mentioned earlier (pages 77, and 112-113), professional and organisational structures mean that EC teachers are qualified and have a wide range of life and work experiences to support their work with children and families day to day.

However, findings from a number of participants in this study indicated that although the teacher holds theoretical knowledge in child development and the sociocultural curriculum, the ECI professional could use a coaching approach to elicit this knowledge and to uncover the EC teacher's inbuilt capacity to problem solve, to achieve best outcomes for the child needing additional learning supports (and their family) in the ECE setting.

Participants mentioned the need for educators and para-professionals to be confident and self-efficacious in adapting the curriculum to enhance participation, which would support the optimal involvement of families in the EC centre community. This is currently expected at legislation and policy level, but only partially enacted at practice level (Foster-Cohen & van Bysterveldt, 2016). Research suggests compulsory sector teacher coachees may have different developmental needs in the coaching process and that this can be measured by the focus of their goal setting (Gallant & Gilham, 2014). In the current study's findings, it appeared not all prospective coachees (i.e. educators) in the ECE setting were aware of their role in the coaching process, but data did not examine goal setting. This is likely because very little practical coaching had occurred with EC educators, but also because the main focus of the coaching process is predetermined. Specifically, planning focuses narrowly on the child's participation in the curriculum and their involvement in activities and routines at EC and home. Therefore, differences in levels of teacher experience and thus ability to appropriately adapt the environment, may be less of an issue. Moreover, current study findings also suggest a coach's own developmental process may be just as contributory to any challenges that occur in the coaching dyad.

Issues with working across differing EC centres were noted by participants. These differences were attributed to whole centre philosophical position, for example, key differences in philosophy could occur with Rudolph Steiner, Montessori, religious or culturally based, or

community run preschools. Inherent in working with differing philosophical positions across centres, *and* with changing needs within a centre where more than one child received services, or teacher capability to adapt the curriculum varies as discussed above, is the requirement for flexibility. Flexibility or the ability to adapt was emphasised by a number of participants in this study. This corroborates literature which identifies flexibility as a factor that determines how collaborative ECI services are perceived by families and EC centres (Dinnebeil et al., 1999).

4. The current study indicated challenges with fostering family independence and consistently working in a strengths-based manner. Both fostering independence and strengths-based practice relate to the principle of family-centred practice (Alliston, 2007; MoE, 2011). In family-centred practice, ECI professionals "must…consciously use specific practices that equalise the balance of power such that families become the ultimate decision makers and agents of change" (Epse Sherwindt, 2008, p. 139). The current findings concur with existent literature which suggests even when ECI professionals have the best intentions for family-centric practice, disempowerment sometimes occurs (Lea, 2006; Lee, 2015; Mahoney et al., 1999; McWilliam et al., 2000; Smiler, 2016; Swafford, Wingate, Zagummy, & Richie, 2015; Tomlin et al., 2016). For example, in Deaf education in ECI in New Zealand, Smiler (2016) identified relationships with families are "predominately professional-led", and that the implementation of family-centred practice is "inconsistent". In the current data however, both family and professional factors were identified to challenge the work carried out with families, including parents knowing their responsibilities in the ECI process, EC professionals outnumbering family members to a large extent, and type and manner of communication used, especially effective listening to hear the family's perspective.

Participants in the current study suggested ECI professionals frequently take on a default practice position which helps create a dependence, where they 'do for' families and other team members

(e.g. Participant 2 on page 82). Such findings align with existent literature such as Swafford et al. (2015) who identified examples of parental disempowerment such as when ECI professionals carried out actions on their behalf - “I could have made the phone call but she did it” (Swafford et al., 2015, p. 148); and Tomlin et al. (2016) who found direct instruction was more likely to be demonstrated than "reflective activities such as asking questions" (p. 624). Similarly, Lee (2015) found professional voice to be privileged in partnerships with families, with further work needed in supporting family empowerment in the execution of their rights, as well as relationship building and sensitivity to family needs given the intrusive nature of intervention (Lee, 2015). Further, Rix and Paige-Smith (2008) identified genuine power imbalances between parents and professionals, in relationships characterised by “asymmetric mutual dependence” with parents “beholden to the professional” (p. 216). It is possible that the challenges present in the current study around fostering independence of families, may be due to historical discourses that need to be contested in an ongoing manner.

In the current study, challenges to the implementation of coaching were seen to be multifactorial, with family factors a small part of this. This runs counter to literature which has found professionals were more likely to attribute the inability to deliver optimal collaborative and participation based services predominantly to family factors (Fleming et al., 2011; Meaden et al., 2018). Like these referent studies, the current study showed that achieving a shared expectation about ECI participation-based services could be challenging, and that family stressors could impact involvement in ECI overall especially in situations where identifying strengths was deemed difficult. Differing from the current findings however, Fleming et al. (2011) also attributed practice difficulties to family characteristics such as level of openness, motivation, and commitment to sessions, with some professionals assuming families did not wish to be involved in the ECI process. Instead, current findings indicated the limited amount of face-to-face time spent working with parents was more likely to be due to work schedules rather than a lack of

commitment. This meant it was more likely participants worked with teaching staff in EC centres rather than with parents. These findings echo those which suggest professionals may work with caregivers other than a parent (Salisbury et al., 2010), and that scheduling issues were common (Knoche et al., 2013) with information often passed on second hand to family members (Douglas et al., 2019).

Current findings suggest family perspectives about coach and coachee roles in the coaching process can be challenging. These findings align with several studies which have identified that the expectations of families of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds can limit implementation (Douglas et al., 2019; Graham et al., 2018; Meaden et al., 2018; Salisbury et al., 2010; Stewart & Applequist, 2019)). Stewart and Applequist (2019) for example, found respect for the professional as the specialist, and expectations that they will lead the ECI process and fix the child, contribute to confusion about roles and responsibilities. However, some of the issues may have arisen because of the linguistic diversity present. Current findings extend those of existent studies, pointing out that part of the challenge is with professional beliefs about family capabilities, rather than a family's expectations based on cultural understandings and language factors. This aligns with the idea that implicit societal rules may guide an individual's practice (Engeström, 1987).

In particular, empowering families of culturally diverse backgrounds through a coaching process, may be viewed as a potential issue from those ECI professionals who have limited cultural competence and understanding or who have pervasive attitudes about their expert role. Given that beliefs about development and disability, expectations about ECI services, and preferred practices, may vary across ethnicities and cultures, having professionals who "recognise and understand the diversity in families' needs, priorities and desires" is paramount (Sukkar et al., 2016, p. 110). Current study findings emphasised that professional beliefs could be detrimental

to a family's ability to self-determine. At a practical level it seems pertinent to question whether families from diverse cultures are not adapting to a coaching approach, or whether ECI professionals need to find a better way of explaining the coaching process and roles and responsibilities involved, in order for a family to be well informed. This way the family can decide if this is a collaborative approach they are willing participate in.

The practice of coaching. Two main areas of challenge were noted with the practice of coaching, namely 1) taking on a coaching position, and 2) putting coaching theory into practice. These challenges will now be discussed.

1. Coaching empowers the coachee to draw upon their own personal resources (MacMillan, 2011), to create a situation where their child (and family) is participating in everyday routines and activities in the natural learning environment. To achieve this, the coach needs to take on a coaching position, which includes giving up control as the more knowledgeable person, focusing on the coachee, (thus rendering them-selves invisible) and being open, honest, and non-judgemental. The coach becomes the listener, inquirer, detective, and reason-er (Cox, 2013; Silsbee, 2010). The coach's ability to position themselves and respond appropriately in the coaching dyad, rests largely in their awareness of themselves and of the coachee (O'Broin & Palmer, 2010). To work from a coaching position, the ECI professional firstly needs to have a good knowledge of what coaching is. As noted in the current findings, this is confounded when coaching is perceived to be inadequately labelled, with its historical links to sport and instructional coaching influencing its conceptualisation.

According to general coaching literature, a coaching position relates to the coach's ability to believe in the coachee and to promote relationship above all else (de Haan & Gannon, 2017; de Haan & Sills, 2012; Rush & Shelden, 2011; Whitmore, 2009). Participants discussed these aspects as key challenges when aiming for an attitudinal position congruent with coaching.

However, other literature suggests that although relational aspects of collaborative practices such as coaching *are* important, it is the participatory aspects that are often overlooked or inadequately addressed (Campbell & Sawyer, 2007; Dunst & Trivette, 1996; 2009b; Rush & Shelden, 2011). Therefore, although current study participants found relational factors to be important and challenging, the impact of this on their overall practical coaching abilities is less certain.

As stated earlier in Chapter Five *What understandings of coaching do ECI professionals have?* all participants had an idea of what coaching is, but data suggested a slight conflict about how it was constituted. Although most participants felt it was not an expert or consultative practice, there was confusion around the place of directing, modelling, observing, and instruction in ECI coaching. In particular, current findings suggest those who are emerging coaches could be more likely to mention modelling and advice-giving as part of their coaching construct. One explanation is that participants were simply in the early stages of shifting to a new ECI practice, which was paradigmatically different from the way they had previously been practising. Participants with coaching experience or a fuller understanding of the practice were less likely to focus on modelling and instruction as strategies, suggesting more experienced coaches have a better theoretical understanding of what coaching is, and are therefore more able to take on the coaching position. Such findings are helpful in guiding professional learning design.

2. Findings indicated that the application of coaching theory in practice can be challenging, especially where few practical learning opportunities arose and reflection was limited. Literature suggests practical implementation of new professional learning can be difficult, with reflection needed to help bridge the theory to practice gap (Dunst, 2015; Helyer, 2015; Schön, 1987, 1991). In Mitchell and Cubey (2003) for example, professional learning which helped educators “to gain awareness of their own thinking, actions, and influence” (Mitchell & Cubey, 2003, p. xi) thus influencing attitude, and that supported integration of theory

in practice, was found to be most effective. In particular, successful professional learning drew on professionals' current capacities, provided appropriate background theory and content knowledge, and allowed time for in-depth reflexive processes and experimentation of pedagogies in familiar settings and subsequently any revision of practice (Mitchell & Cubey, 2003). Salisbury et al. (2010) similarly identified the importance of time for reflection. Findings from the current study compliment these ideas, with participants clear about the difficulties present in putting coaching into practice.

Paradoxically, one of the best reported tools to support implementation of new practices, is coaching (Tout, Isner, & Zaslow, 2011; Powell et al., 2012; Snyder et al., 2015). The utilisation of coaching to support the implementation of coaching as a practice was identified in Chapter Four *How are ECI professionals learning about coaching?*, where being coached was seen as a mechanism of learning. However this was reported as having occurred preliminarily only.

Coaching develops through a progression of competence. Participants' self-identification as emergent coaches is compatible with Leat et al. (2012, p. 54) which shows beginner coaches concentrate on more specific coaching content (i.e. coach execution of the coaching process), and later when the coach gains more experience, on coachee's practice and the place of this within wider community and societal contexts. Therefore, the participants' focus on coaching specific behaviours in the current data corroborates self-reports of being early in the progression of learning how to coach.

One example of ECI professionals having an understanding of coaching theory but finding it difficult to put this into practice was with the strategy of questioning. After professional learning, participants reported increasing their use of questioning; however, implementing this strategy was challenging for some participants. This finding corroborates Salisbury et al. (2017) who found integrating questioning into practice to be difficult, in part because the ECI professional

was being too directive. Given that difficulties with other specific strategies were not reported in the present study, it is likely that questioning posed a genuine challenge for professionals attempting to change their practice to be more facilitative.

Implementation challenges were present when different understandings of coaching were held. Although a particular type of coaching may be represented in the literature, it is important to keep in mind that when designing professional learning the most critical elements to coaching should be introduced in a way that they are able to be easily conceptualised. These findings help make a case for strong theory-based professional learning to be provided in the initial stages of a coaching implementation programme, prior to ECI professionals embarking on any practical coaching exercises. The introduction of theoretical material as part of early professional learning has been advocated by Dunst (2015), Timperley et al. (2007), and Mitchell and Cubey (2003), but, they suggest this should occur in combination with processes of application and reflection. Certainly, a good understanding of theory would enable coaching to be more readily applied.

There is a dilemma when introducing theory however, as to whether this should be through a specific and prescribed model, or by way of a principles-based approach. In this study, participants had been introduced to Rush and Shelden's EC coaching and Whitmore's GROW model, although a principles-based approach to coaching was both explicitly and implicitly mentioned. Literature suggests behaviourally-focused models where knowledge and behaviours and skills are separated are particularly important when coaching skills are at an emergent level, (Bachkirova et al., 2017; Friedman et al., 2012), and that beginning coaches are more likely to be concerned with coaching content and the rules by which to perform 'good' coaching (Ives, 2008; Megginson & Clutterbuck, 2009). In the current study, it appeared that the theoretical content participants had been exposed to through structured professional learning mechanisms

such as workshops or reading materials, was the material that had been retained. However, as has been stated previously this did not mean it had been trialled continuously in practice.

It is not clear whether presenting all relevant materials as a recipe to a specified model upfront supports the goal of applying coaching in practice. In the current study, a few participants gained a better understanding of coaching by interacting with the new practice in a self-directed manner across time, and trialling it in practice as part of this. Whether the theoretical material offered to professionals is prescribed, or refers simply to key principles for exploration, brings us back to an issue which was raised in the introductory chapter of this thesis. There is a difference between the terms training, professional development, and learning. If learning is to be undertaken by the ECI professional as the active participant, then room needs to be left for the professionals to develop their own understandings of a new practice. Naturally, appropriate structures need to be in place to support learning, but only a certain amount of didactic theory-sharing at the beginning of learning cycles may be necessary.

The professional learning context. Three overall challenges were found in the professional learning context. These were 1) organisational factors, 2) resources, and 3) professional learning content and design. These will be discussed as follows.

1. Three main challenges relating to structures and processes present in organisations delivering ECI were described. The first finding related to organisation and managerial support for professional learning in coaching. It is possible coaching had not been further implemented because of limitations to the organisational support offered for professional learning. Tatla et al. (2017) found funding, scheduling of professional development, and support from managers and leaders to be impacting organisational factors. Salisbury et al. (2010) found support and flexibility from administrators, continuous team structures, and planning and review participation to be supportive of implementation. As mentioned on page 118, synergistic reasons were present

for pursuing professional learning in coaching in this study. In terms of organisational support however, the level of encouragement offered from managers was unclear, although structural supports in the form of practice advisory, involvement of external personnel, and access to a range of professional learning activities were reported.

Second, working across education sectors and with other disciplines emerged as another challenge. This challenge concerned the makeup of ECI teams, and how professional learning could be offered to professionals with wide ranging focuses and interests that worked across both preschool and compulsory sector. This was questioned quite tentatively either due to the personality of the participant, or because comments were not compatible with the organisational position at the time. However, with interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary ECI service provision being the norm, ECI professionals are well-versed with working with colleagues from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds. So, the source of discomfort was likely about having colleagues with little expertise in non-compulsory sector service delivery, due to their previous sole focus on compulsory sector. This fits with the ideas discussed in the final part of discussion in this section, where ECI professionals perceive themselves to hold specialist knowledge in EC and ECI fields.

Third and finally, organisational professional learning challenges were shown to occur because of differences across geographic areas. Literature describes solutions for professional learning in remote areas (e.g. Brown & Woods, 2012; Francois et al., 2015) and based on findings, it appears in some cases these methods have also been utilised in Aotearoa New Zealand (e.g. video conference).

2. In terms of resources, supportive infrastructure is needed to ensure professional learning results in better outcomes for children and families (Bruder, 2016). Coaching is viewed as a resource intensive practice (Snyder et al., 2015), with both professional learning and its

implementation taking time and effort, which has financial implications (Tatla et al., 2017). In the current study, funding appeared to influence whether outside personnel were involved in an ongoing capacity to facilitate professional learning activities; and, whether independent providers sought to attend professional learning organised by governmental or professional bodies. Although financial challenges and cost analyses are frequently overlooked in professional learning in ECI literature, this finding is supported by Bruder (2016) who noted inadequate funding impacts the type of learning activities offered to ECI professionals. Similarly, Francois, et al. (2015) found funding to have been a reason for limited focus in family-centred practices in both course content and practicum experiences in preparing trainee speech pathologists for work. In the current study, internal personnel resources were suggested as a solution for professional learning funding issues. This finding supports data that suggests although external professional learning support personnel are sometimes present in the compulsory sector in the long-term, only some external provision is usually necessary to execute change (Timperley et al., 2007). Instead it is ongoing engagement and reflection cycles in light of the professionals' current context that are more likely to result in improved outcomes for learners. Furthermore, Timperley et al. (2007) point out that personnel bought in from outside can be inspirational, but more is required in the long term for changes to occur as a result of professional learning. It should also be noted funding issues may also have been the reason why, at the time of the final interviews for this study, practice advisory team structures at the governmental ECI provider were about to change (personal communication, 2016). This was over and above data suggesting funding was a deciding issue in how professional learning was designed.

Although challenges regarding financial and personnel resources were identified by a few participants, issues associated with time were more commonly mentioned. These findings have some alignment with literature in ECI coaching which indicate time factors influences implementation. Salisbury et al. (2010) found time for reflection and talking, and to "learn, try,

practice" (p. 142) coaching were important. Knoche et al. (2013) identified that time challenges could affect frequency, length and scheduling of coaching sessions, and that both ECI professional workload, and coachee time constraints could also be a factor. In the current study, findings suggested professional practice was somewhat time pressured, although data also offered solutions for those professionals struggling with demands, suggesting prioritisation and better management were in order.

Time challenges associated with professional learning were also evident. These included the learning demands for those in training, and the length of time taken for professional learning content to be integrated into everyday work. This finding coincides with those discussed by Killion (2013) who also suggested limited time impacts professional learning. However, Timperley et al. (2007) concluded the ways time was utilised to be more important. Specifically, participation in professional learning interventions in the compulsory sector mostly lasted between six and twenty four months, but, this did not necessarily result in outcomes for the student learner. How time was used and how engaged the professional learner was, was more important than how much time was spent on professional learning.

3. Professional learning in health and education assumes the professional to be capable of self-directing their own learning, and many ethical and professional guidelines emphasise this (EIAANZ, 2019; Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2020). Although online tools support self-directed learning, where the basis of a professional practice is interacting with adults, online professional learning may not suffice. Further thought is required about which aspects of coaching can be taught online (Brown et al., 2012) and which are better taught by other methods.

Where self-directed learning in interactive practices such as coaching (or routines-based interviewing) is taking place with families and educators, ECI professionals need appropriate supports to ensure practice does not place the coachee into a role of experimental subject.

Trialling collaborative practices with peers, as was reported by some participants in the current study, is a first step option to trialling coaching in person. Such a step shows respect for the families and educators working with children day to day, to ensure appropriate skill level is built before using coaching for real. Current findings suggested this was sometimes overlooked if participants' priority was to seek out practicum experiences because field advisors had not ensured these happened naturally as part of their practical learning experience. In other words, some practical experiences of coaching may need to be specifically organised with families and appropriate dialogue and observation planned, much as has occurred with the routines-based interview, otherwise the practice may be ignored or put in the too hard basket due to ECI professionals feeling they lack skill.

The current study findings indicated not all professional learning materials were culturally applicable for the Aotearoa New Zealand context, particularly because of their Americanisation. Similar evaluation of cultural applicability of American professional assessment systems has been documented in Asia, with mixed results. (Hu, Fan, Gu, & Yang, 2016; Lai, Chao, Yang, Liu, & Chen, 2013). The pre-kindergarten Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) has been found to be applicable in Chinese early education settings (Hu et al., 2016), while a North American nursing diagnostic system was found to be at odds with traditional Chinese health beliefs and practices in Taiwan (Lai et al., 2013). Notwithstanding the adaption of existent resources to include appropriate language as was identified as a solution by one participant in the current study, making links to the Treaty of Waitangi underlying principles and developing a kaupapa Māori approach to coaching may also be indicated.

Information overload has also been found to be a challenging factor in a range of online learning situations (Epstein, 2004). This was noted as a factor for some but not all participants who were studying in the Specialist Teaching programme. This corresponds with findings of Chen (2003),

who identified factors which prevent information overload in online learning. These included "online class preparation, identifying relevant information, processing online information and printed materials, keeping learning on track, organizing learning, and avoiding internal and external distractions" (Chen, 2003, p. iv). Whilst self-directed learning should be seen as a relevant and necessary professional learning mechanism and an expected skill in ECI professionals, formal theoretical and empirical information introducing a new practice, needs to be delivered in a way that bypasses extraneous information. Later when ECI professionals are more familiar with the practice, self-directed investigations could be more appropriate.

The professional and their practice. Four main areas of challenge were noted with the professional and their practice - namely 1) changing roles and responsibilities, 2) trusting the new practice, 3) feelings of discomfort, and 4) professional identity. These challenges will now be discussed.

1. Participants identified that the changing roles and responsibilities associated with coaching challenged its implementation. Both professional and families have been reported as having difficulties understanding and taking on the new coaching roles (Meaden et al., 2018; Salisbury et al., 2010). Taking responsibility for one's own actions in the coaching process is a key difference from traditional approaches, where there may previously have been a propensity to rely on the professional to lead the ECI process, and fix the child in therapy-type services. In the current study, participants' shared perceptions of their changing role, as well as descriptions about families' and educators' expectations and adaption to their own. Although coaching literature suggests the coach will ensure the coachee understands their roles and responsibilities in the process prior to beginning coaching (Akhbari Ziegler & Hadders-Algra, 2020), this was not supported by current data. In this study, for example there appeared to be expectation from

one participant in particular, that coachees would already understand their part in coaching prior to the involvement of the coach.

2. Current findings indicated both coaching as a new practice and the professional learning process surrounding its introduction, required a degree of professional trust, precluding any reliance on research evidence proving its effectiveness. As discussed earlier, Lanzara (2016) cautions that the introduction of innovative practices and tools in the workplace can be met either negatively or positively. Where little trust in the new practice is present, it may be because it "threatens people's engrained habits and routines" (Lanzara, 2016, p. 15). This line of thinking aligns with Timperley et al. (2007), who suggest that in cases where new practices challenge past and current ways of working, "iterative cycles of thinking of alternatives" and testing these may be required (Timperley et al., 2007, p. xxvii). Professional utilisation of evidence confirming new approaches to be satisfactory is useful for the adoption of and belief in new practices. Therefore the introduction of practice alternatives such as the routines-based interview and routines-based early intervention (section 4.2.3) is likely to have contested historical methods of direct ECI service delivery methods, whilst simultaneously building ECI professionals' understanding of and trust in coaching.

3. A further reported internal challenge for participants was their feelings of confusion and discomfort when learning about coaching. These findings are consistent with the concepts of dissonance (Jones, 2018), and critical thinking which is commonly discussed in professional learning sources in education and health disciplines (Fook & Gardner, 2013; Gambrill, 2012). These feelings of discomfort may also be congruent with the idea of reflexive processes which involve the professional "stand[ing] back from belief and value systems, habitual ways of thinking and relating to others, structures of understanding themselves and their relationship to the world, and their assumptions about the way that the world impinges upon them" (Bolton,

2018, p. 14). Shelden and Rush (2011) and Kuhn (1962) concur that comparing and contrasting the new practice (of coaching in this case) with current and older practices is quite usual and leads to ascertaining similarities or differences between the relative unknown and the known, ensuring a better awareness of the new practice. In the current study, reflexive processes were experienced as a sense of unsettledness as the ECI professional considered the new practice in relation to their current understandings of professional practice.

4. Another internal challenge was the emerging finding that a coaching approach challenged the ECI's professional identity, by threatening the value of their knowledge. The professional holds knowledge about their particular specialist area (in this case early intervention teaching), and 'un-knowing' this knowledge is not really a possibility. Coaching on the other hand requires the coach to be naïve in their inquiry, asking questions they do not necessarily hold the answer to. Such a finding about the professional identity being challenged suggests the introduction of coaching will be met with opposition. In Aotearoa New Zealand the majority of ECI professionals have specialist disciplinary training. The existence of expert professional knowledge is a dilemma further fuelled by EC practices (for example, training and curriculum adaptation) which put teachers in a position to seek 'expert' help from ECI professionals. Specialist training is funded by the MoE to acquire an ECI qualification. Referrals are made for specialist (one could argue 'expert') ECI support. The whole system up to the point of contact is one predicated on the requirement for expertise. So, how can a coaching approach be adopted in such circumstances? And, as queried by Participant 8, how can a professional 'not' contribute their knowledge, ethically? This matter will be further discussed below.

As participants became more aware of the characteristics of coaching, they found it contested the notion of expert practice. This finding aligns with Scanlon (2011) who states that there has been a wider societal shift toward deprofessionalisation of the professions, in the post-modern era.

Deprofessionalisation occurs where 1) professional services are provided by non-professionals, 2) professional skills are watered down or disappear, 3) depersonalisation, instability and accountability measures are present in the workplace as part of a managerial regime, or 4) core values of the professional are contested (Scanlon, 2011). Evidence suggests coaching fits with the first two of these factors (Rotheram-Borus et al., 2018), while current study findings fit most strongly with the notion that the practice challenges the values that are part of the ECI professionals' core identity - for example, being caring, respectful, and trustworthy; and, holding specialist knowledge. The reduction of perceived professionalism linked with coaching means that ECI might be more resistant to take up the new practice.

A genuine conflict was present when participants became aware they held expert knowledge in ECI, yet coaching did not necessarily require this knowledge to be used when working with families. It is possible that these contesting thoughts around expert practice were part of the ongoing reflection of participants in light of their exposure to the new coaching approach. Grant, McKimm, and Murphy (2017) suggest reflection is a process that helps professionals to discover "what they are going to absorb or reject as part of their professional identity and how this will impact on their practice", but that it also exposes vulnerabilities (p. 112). The uncovering of vulnerabilities in professional identity were evident in this study. As mentioned by one participant, if the professionals' motivation to help is based on an internal reward of seeing themselves as the expert or the holder of knowledge, which they can give or transfer to the family or educator, then there may be resistance to change the way one works.

Current findings about professional expertise can also be compared to those found in FPM research, which studied ECI nurses working with families of children at risk in an Australian home visiting setting. The Family Partnership research identified that 'professional expertise' can negatively influence the relationship built with families, and explored how this can be

negotiated (Clerke et al., 2017; Hopwood & Mäkitalo, 2019). Hopwood and Mäkitalo (2019) discussed the "tension between professional epistemic dominance and sidelining professional knowledge" (p. 588), and the need to go beyond expert advice giving and transfer of knowledge which puts the intervention partnership at risk, to otherwise facilitate learning and change. They found that it is possible to prioritise parent goals whilst also contributing professional knowledge and keeping intervention foci such as parent –child relationships in mind, but noted the need for "epistemic work" (p. 600) to address this challenge - a finding congruent with Participant 2 discussing the need for in-depth self-analysis by professionals.

To facilitate change for families in the ECI process, professionals require expertise in relationships, in specialist professional knowledge, and in adult learning (Clerke et al., 2017). However, acknowledging and valuing families' expertise is equally important, with shared understandings of both parties a goal (Clerke et al., 2017). Hopwood and Mäkitalo (2019) found co-constructed practices that "validate [both] professionals and parents as knowing, questioning, caring, and reasoning" to be critical (p. 600). This corresponds with current study findings, where a collaborative coaching situation was envisaged by participants. For a few, being agenda-less in the coaching process was seen as a priority on the part of the coach, and specialist knowledge was not viewed as redundant. Specifically, if a professional had insight from developmental knowledge, then this could and should be utilised to guide coaching questioning, regardless of whether this diverted coaching toward a coach-directed rather than coachee-directed process.

The above findings counter evidence which suggests coaches with expertise do exist and have something to offer the coaching dyad. From business coaching, Graßmann and Schermuly (2016) found that where a sound coaching relationship is in place and the coachee has high motivation, their view of the coach as having expert knowledge can mitigate any negative side-effects of coaching process. In ECI, Rush and Shelden (2011) described expert coaches as those

with knowledge in a disciplinary field, adding to their ability to ask pertinent questions about development for example. However, in this study, participants' perceptions of coaching being a non-expert practice seemed to relate to their relinquishment of the belief that children, families and educators required expert help, and acceptance that coachee's were in control of their own coaching process, with the ability to problem solve and come up with their own solutions. In this way findings demonstrated that as a result of professional learning ECI professionals' understanding about how they would carry out practice was changing.

Outlined in the discussion in this chapter, current study findings indicate a number of different factors could have impeded coaching implementation. Kuhn (1962) suggested the introduction of new ideas or theories usually follow patterns of failure and insecurity where the innovation does not sit comfortably, issues are identified, and there may inner dispute between currently held and new beliefs. Therefore, the acknowledgement of challenges is a positive step toward showing the new approach was being considered and perhaps accepted. This sentiment is shared by Salisbury et al. (2010). Identifying where the key areas of resistance lie, for example at the consumer, professional, organisation, or policy level, means they can then be addressed to support adoption taking place.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

In the previous three chapters, I presented descriptive findings about the adoption of coaching by ECI professionals in naturalistic ECI settings, in Aotearoa New Zealand. In those chapters, I highlighted the key issues that were raised by participants when they described how they engaged in professional learning, and incorporated coaching into their work. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a conclusion to my study, looking at what it contributes to research, and the implications and recommendations that have arisen from its findings. Firstly, the purpose, methodology and methods, and findings of the study will be briefly summarised. Secondly, key implications of study findings will be outlined. Thirdly, key contributions of the study to research are highlighted. Fourthly, the study's limitations are explained, and finally future research and practice considerations are shared. To close, I present a brief reflection on the overall study.

7.1 Recapitulation of Purpose, Methodology, and Findings

Coaching is a collaborative practice supporting the inclusion and participation of children in family routines and natural learning environments (Alliston, 2007; Campbell & Sawyer, 2007). Whilst working as a learning facilitator in the training programme for ECI teaching in Aotearoa New Zealand, I became aware of the need for professional learning materials in coaching, in alignment with expectations in the Early Intervention Practice Framework (MoE, 2011a). Few opportunities appeared to be on offer for ECI professionals to learn about coaching, and little was known about how it was incorporated into daily work with families and educators. Furthermore, a relatively limited range of literature focusing on the implementation of coaching in ECI settings was available at the time, both globally and locally.

The purpose of the current study therefore, was to examine the adoption of coaching by ECI professionals in an education setting in Aotearoa New Zealand, by identifying important perspectives around engagement in in-service and pre-service professional learning, understandings of the practice, and its incorporation into everyday work. In order to achieve this purpose, the following research questions were asked:

- How are ECI professionals learning about coaching?
- What understandings of coaching do ECI professionals have?
- What implementation has occurred?

To carry out the study I utilised a qualitative descriptive design with constructivist and socio-cultural underpinnings to investigate coaching in the local ECI context from the perspective of ECI professionals. The use of purposive sampling meant that participants with all levels of familiarity with coaching were represented. This allowed a broader understanding of how different professionals take up the practice. Using semi-structured interview methods, I interviewed 15 ECI professionals of various work experience levels from across the country. In-depth data were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Gilham, 2005; Ryan & Bernard, 2003) to uncover key themes, in order to answer each of the three research questions.

This study has shown that participants were prepared to learn about coaching as determined by five readiness factors, namely 1) professional background, 2) understanding the relevance of coaching, 3) interest and motivation for learning, 4) knowledge of coaching, and 5) learning context; and, that numerous physical and psychological learning mechanisms played a role in their learning about coaching. This included an iteration of professional learning focused on the routines-based early intervention and routines-based interview which had supported understandings about participation-based, family-centred practices (McWilliam, 2010).

The research has also shown, that in terms of participants' understandings of coaching, there was general agreement about its facilitative nature and underpinning humanistic, relational, conversational and solution-focused principles. Participants were aware of the coaching models they had learned about in professional learning, but data also suggested they believed it to be process-based. Questioning was seen as a very important coaching strategy. Most participants considered coaching to be different from supervision, consulting, and mentoring. Although coaching was not considered to be like teaching, strategies such as modelling, imitation and instructing were understood to be relevant in some situations, by a few participants. The wider applicability of coaching in the ECI workplace was also acknowledged.

The study also identified that initial implementation of coaching had occurred, as demonstrated by experimentation with the practice in professional activities and application in workplace settings with colleagues and families. However, this practical implementation of coaching was preliminary, with most participants indicating they were still learning about the practice. Although this could have been due to the stage of change participants were at, or their perceived level of competence, many other possible reasons for the limited implementation were mentioned. Key areas of challenge were ECI contextual features, the practice of coaching, professional learning, and the professional and their practice.

The relationship between my findings and previous research has been comprehensively discussed across Chapters Four – Six.

7.2 Implications of the Research Findings

The findings of this study have a number of important implications for policy, practice and research in ECI.

Taken together, study findings have helped uncover positive impacts of coaching. As informed by literature and participant data, the characteristics of coaching and the potential benefit of its application show it is an important practice tool, allowing ECI services to become increasingly family-centred, participation-based, and collaborative in nature. The acknowledgement of these benefits supports the pressing need for research into the effectiveness of ECI coaching on outcomes for children, families and EC centres. Further, it is not clear whether the benefits of coaching in ECI have been fully understood by ECI professionals beyond the study. If coaching has as much potential as preliminary research suggests, then its use should be advocated for more strongly. In addition, if coaching is indeed the most suitable way to enact family-centred practices, then steps should be taken to align service delivery methods of governmental and independent ECI providers with this paradigm.

This study's findings offer some insight into the factors that could influence readiness for professional learning in coaching. If the application of coaching, or another new practice, is going to be effective and efficient, then the range of predisposing factors contributing to this should be identified, and conditions created for these areas to be supported and enhanced. Although this study only identified five factors that could positively influence professional learning, this would suggest that there may be others, therefore further research in this area could be useful.

In findings focused on the relevance of the new practice, only a few links were made between policy and practice guidelines and coaching by participants in this study, even when this information was specifically asked about. It should be noted, that without access to information helping tie these ideas together, there is a possibility that the relevance of coaching may not be fully understood by the ECI professionals being asked to try a new practice, particularly from an organisational perspective. Certainly, if efforts to enact coaching in alignment with the Early Intervention Practice Framework are serious, more comprehensive professional learning is

indicated. Specifically, professional learning could share knowledge about the links between collaborative practices such as coaching and underlying legislation, policy and practice documents.

Although routines-based interviewing is more structured and therefore perhaps less natural than coaching, it offers an introduction to embedded intervention in daily routines, goal setting and identification of existent resources, which are characteristics shared with coaching. Notably, the apparent challenges associated with the implementation of the routines-based interview suggest a risk the practice might not been maintained in the long-term. If this was the case, then coaching's close association with routines-based early intervention and routines-based interview might mean that some of the impetus for learning about coaching was also lost. It is hoped that the momentum gained from wide-scale learning in routines-based early intervention and interviewing, has been continued through ongoing and comprehensive efforts to adopt a coaching approach beyond the time-frame of the study.

Together, readiness, learning mechanisms, and challenges to implementation findings appear to support the argument for professional learning to remain a central focus when considering how implementation of coaching can be supported. As stated in the 2004 Review for Resource Teachers in Early Intervention (Corby et al., 2004), research from overseas suggests cohesiveness and alignment between EC and ECI training and professional learning for those in the field should exist, and in particular exposure to collaborative approaches should be paramount, especially given the range of disciplines involved in ECI and the need to support transitions; (Education Review Office, 2015; Stayton & Bruder, 1999). In the case of coaching, concerted effort should be made to introduce the practice comprehensively in formal EC and ECI qualifications as well as through in-service professional learning for ECI professionals.

Findings addressing the first research question in this study suggested a range of useful professional learning mechanisms had been in use. However, identified challenges also indicate that further work in professional design is needed, to ensure ECI professionals are better placed to support families and their children. Study implications concern both the content of professional learning, and how it might be delivered. In particular independent, self-directed professional learning required by ethical codes can be viewed as a priority (see page 41), but this should be balanced with a range of formal and informal collaborative learning activities such as professional learning groups, supervision, and peer discussion, where reflective conversations about coaching can take place. In addition, both structured theoretical content and opportunities for application could be offered. As identified in findings addressing Research Questions Two and Three, even when theoretical learning occurs this does not mean coaching or other collaborative practices will be carried out in everyday work (Campbell & Sawyer, 2009), therefore examination of best practices would be needed to appropriately design an overall coaching programme.

As identified from the limited implementation that had occurred, sufficient opportunities should be given to practise coaching in hypothetical and real-life situations, to ensure professionals feel both competent and confident in practically applying their theoretical understandings.

In this study, psychological mechanisms of learning were visible, and data also indicated ECI professionals valued reflection and had a reasonable understanding of their own professional learning. However, there still appears to be room for those designing structures for professional learning to consider how learner's attitudinal dispositions may be challenged, reflection prioritised, and understanding of the coaching paradigm better encouraged.

In conflict with available literature, few participants discussed mentor coaching when talking about professional learning mechanisms. One way of further supporting implementation in an

ongoing way appears to be for mentor coaching to be offered. This will be especially important for beginner coaches as they trial coaching in the field, to ensure they have confidence in their own coaching abilities. Knowledge and skills gained through preservice training could be further encouraged through ongoing coaching and supervision by peers or leaders working as coaches. It will be useful for those who are responsible for this follow-up mentor coaching, to upskill their coaching skills in order to support those applying the practice in the field.

Based on findings about organisational challenges, efforts should be made to ensure professional learning for ECI professionals providing services in rural and semi-rural areas, are equitable with those in urban areas, and, also that content is relevant to the client base in those areas. For example, if the area has many hard to reach families, that professional learning is designed to problem solve around how coaching might work in these circumstances.

In relation to findings about challenges with resources, in both pre-service and in-service contexts steps should be made to ensure specific time is allocated for professionals to learn about coaching, in addition to other important training requirements. Furthermore, professional learning iterations should be of adequate duration to allow for trialling coaching in practice and reflection cycles.

Findings from the second research question in this study suggest that ECI professionals generally agree that coaching is humanistic, relationship-focused, based in conversation, and solution-focused; however, a few areas of contention do exist. It is possible that understandings of coaching might continue to evolve for professionals as they learn, but to find out for sure, further research is needed in this area. As identified in challenges with implementation of coaching data, from a practical perspective having a firm idea of what coaching is, is critical, if the ECI professional is going to apply the practice in work based settings. For this reason, it would be useful to develop professional learning resources that allow a good understanding of the

theoretical positioning of coaching, and that differentiate it from other similar practices. The differences between coaching and other practices create a backdrop for discussion about important aspects of interactive work that occurs with all members of the ECI team. This further emphasises the need for professional learning to move beyond the theoretical, to actual application in practice. A starting point to learning more about the theoretical underpinnings of coaching, may be for learners to identify the knowledge about the practice they already possess, in order to unlearn or dispel any misunderstandings that are held.

As outlined in discussion regarding understandings of coaching and having a coaching position, in terms of theoretical knowledge, it will be important to ascertain whether it is best for a defined coaching model to be introduced, as opposed to a set of strategies or key principles. There are benefits of each however, so it may be about presenting both sets of materials and allowing the ECI professional to trial and reflect on their implementation individually.

Findings in the study suggested that the strategy of questioning is not only understood to be a central aspect of coaching, but that it may be a difficult to put into practice. This has implications for both research and practice. Further research is needed to determine which aspects of questioning are the most difficult for the emergent coach, and whether this sense of difficulty diminishes across time. Thought too must go to professional learning, with ample opportunity for practising questioning needed to ensure the ECI professional is both competent and confident in utilising the strategy to encourage reflection.

One of the main implications of this study relates to how the findings can help determine a way to successfully implement coaching in field-based settings, by addressing the identified challenges and resistances. A key issue to consider is how implementation can effectively occur when the cultural current keeping the status quo is quite strong. Resistance might particularly be occurring where professionals' identify themselves as having expert knowledge, or if, based on

historical discourses, they perceive a family is incapable of self-determining their own ECI pathway. These issues suggest a need for continuing conversations about knowledge and power in ECI professional learning. A further issue concerns the need to apply theoretical coaching knowledge in practice. This is problematic if ECI professionals are a) unsure what coaching really means as indicated in data about taking on a coaching position, b) have little opportunity to trial it in practice, and c) have limited reflection time to consolidate practical understandings. Professional learning is discussed elsewhere in this section, however these influencing factors should be considered by those with responsibility for its design. Ultimately however, research should continue with its quest for a shared definition of coaching in ECI, specifically where it pertains to the inclusion and participation of children and families in natural learning environments.

In terms of roles and responsibilities in the coaching dyad, findings suggests the prospective coachee should have relevant information about what coaching entails, and be given the option to withdraw from the process if they are not comfortable with any aspect of it. As outlined in the discussion it is the role of the coach to ensure the coachee understands what coaching is before embarking on a course of coaching. Relevant and readily accessible resources may aid conversations around this area.

7.3 Contribution of this Research

This study adds to the growing body of research in coaching for inclusion and participation in ECI settings, globally. It is also one of few that have investigated coaching in the socio-cultural context of ECI in Aotearoa New Zealand. An intervention study has examined the effectiveness of coaching in addition to training in increasing social communication strategies of parents of children with autistic spectrum disorder (Pretorius, 2018), whilst a previous related

study has looked at occupational performance coaching training and implementation in a paediatric rehabilitation setting for occupational and physio therapists (Graham et al., 2018). The current study however, is the first to explore the adoption of coaching by ECI professionals locally, in an educational setting.

The findings from the study make several contributions to the current literature. First, they contribute to our understanding of professional learning as a process rather than an event. Whilst some previous studies have described professional learning that took place discretely, few have looked at professional learning in coaching in such depth. This study offers insights about the different activities and transactions that occur for the professional to develop coaching knowledge and skills. It also discusses the range of resources that support the professional with their learning. Furthermore, findings account for some of the informal learning that occurs, which has been infrequently documented in the past.

Second, findings on participants' understandings of coaching provide deeper insight into the process by which professionals might implement the practice. Previous studies have frequently looked at the execution of coaching skills through behavioural observation of video, without examining the knowledge and beliefs held about the practice. It is important to first examine what ECI professionals understand coaching to be, to ensure they are putting in place the practice efficaciously. Standing alone, the findings about participants' understandings also provide valuable data to add to coaching literature, as limited studies in ECI have investigated what participants know, from their own perspective.

Finally, the findings shed light on key areas of resistance in the process by which ECI professionals implement coaching in practice. In part, they confirm the findings of Tatla et al. (2017), Salisbury et al. (2010), Knoche et al. (2013), and Meaden et al. (2018) who found time, organisational supports, and the adjustment to new roles and responsibilities to be important

factors in the implementation of coaching. They also highlight how a professional's identity as an expert may be challenged by the move to a coaching approach. Current findings will not only be useful for coaching researchers, but for those responsible for the adoption of other new practices in the field.

7.4 Limitations of the Study

A number of limitations to the study have been identified.

As this study used a qualitative approach, the principle of transferability was sought. However, due to the need to protect participants' confidentiality in a relatively small local field, I had to withhold age and ethnicity and summarise professional qualification and experience data, therefore, the ability for readers to make inferences about study findings based on contextual features may have been affected.

I should also make clear that as a descriptive study, although I have described the stage of implementation the participants may have been at, based on their own reports, I have deliberately not evaluated the effectiveness of the professional learning that took place by measuring implementation. Instead there is some data on the value participants placed on different aspects of learning.

Although steps were taken to ensure participants knew it did not matter if they had or had not participated in professional learning, and that there were no pre-conceptions about their understandings and implementation overall, it is possible that my presence as researcher had encouraged a focus on coaching in the months of involvement for the project. Any subsequent learning about the practice and its implementation beyond the point of data collection, is unknown.

Although efforts were made to gather strong data through the use of semi-structured interviews, the study was limited by having collected data at a single data point for each participant. Further information about the extent of implementation of coaching in the local ECI context, and participants' reflections on this process may have been missed.

My study was primarily concerned with coaching in ECI, however, in some cases, interview questioning may have been remiss in gathering important information about other topics raised by the participants. Interview probing could have been used to further effect, however, in keeping with semi-structured interviewing method, it was not within the scope of the research to follow up the range of additional topics, as professional learning in coaching and its implementation remained the focus.

7.5 Future Considerations

7.5.1 Future research directions. The current study looked at a wide range of data across readiness for learning, professional learning in coaching, challenges to implementation and the growing understandings of coaching as a result of theoretical and practical learning. However, overall, the study was descriptive and preliminary. Further qualitative research using phenomenological or narrative approaches could provide in-depth data about the ECI professional's experience of learning how to coach. In particular, more detailed investigation is needed regarding the specific psychological learning mechanisms at work.

Given the lack of empirical data in coaching in ECI currently, this study needs to be followed by strong research programmes which evidence the impact of the practice for all involved. This means studies should investigate coaching from the perspective of both family and educator coachees, as well as coaches.

Findings suggested some participants were unsure whether coaching involved strategies such as imitation, modelling and instructing, which has implications for implementation. Although some research in this area exists, further work is needed to determine what coaching in ECI is, both theoretically and practically. Definitions in the coaching niche of ECI should be compared with both generalist coaching literature, and the understandings of both ECI professionals and coachees who are utilising the practice investigated. It is important that coaching is implemented as it is intended in order for efficacy to be assured, and effectiveness to be accurately measured.

Further work needs to be done to confirm current readiness findings and to establish if other readiness factors might be influential in an ECI professional learning how to coach. A survey study could help obtain valuable data in this area, for both research and practice purposes.

Further evaluative research is needed to fully understand the impact of specific professional learning in coaching. Although both qualitative and quantitative methods could be useful, a single-case series design would offer the ability to measure effectiveness of implementation across time for individual participants.

Participants in this study spoke about questioning as an important coaching strategy, but said that its application can be difficult. In future, research could help identify the perceived appropriateness, frequency, difficulty, and impact of certain types of questioning in the coaching process, as a way of investigating ways that questioning might best be implemented.

7.5.2 Policy and practice recommendations. The findings of this study have a number of important implications for future policy and practice. These are:

It will be useful for ECI organisations to consider whether their service delivery models fit with the coaching paradigm if they are to utilise a coaching approach.

It is recommended that in the next revision or update of the Early Intervention Practice Framework, that coaching be discussed with stronger wording either as a preferred or recommended practice according to the available evidence-base at the time. It is also recommended that a manual or guideline in ECI coaching be developed in line with this practice document, to support the work of practice advisors and emerging ECI professionals.

Drawing from professional learning evidence and data from this study, a structured learn-to-coach programme should be re-developed to suit the local in-service context/s, incorporating:

a) theoretical content in coaching history and background, any links to current ECI practices, policy and legislation, principles, models, process, and important strategies such as questioning

b) regular opportunities to practise coaching in hypothetical and real-life situations,

c) individual and collaborative reflection,

d) ongoing support from mentor coaches or supervisors familiar with the coaching paradigm

In order to reach professionals in all geographic regions and to enable self-study, the use of online resources such as video may be useful.

Coaching content in early intervention teacher pre-service training should also be evaluated and re-developed in line with the above.

An online coaching resource for all ECI professionals working with families and other professionals in Aotearoa New Zealand could be developed to help explain what coaching is, and to allow both coaches and coachees to better understand the process they are being invited to be involved in.

7.6 Author's Reflection

At the start of this thesis journey I was aware that despite widespread interest in coaching in ECI due to its alignment with inclusive, participatory and family-centred practices, in Aotearoa New Zealand in particular there were limited professional learning opportunities available – at least that is what it appeared from the outside. I am most grateful to the participants in this study and the organisations in which they worked, for allowing me to listen to their perspectives on the uptake of coaching as a new practice. As the research process revealed, most participants had a reasonably clear idea of what coaching was. This had occurred as a result of their engagement in a range of professional learning mechanisms. Some of these mechanisms were formal, others less so, however, all contributed to learning. Although further opportunities for application of coaching could help ensure its wide-scale implementation, most participants had a small amount of practical experience which had aided their overall learning. This research project has allowed me to see the scope of professional learning activities that occur in field-based settings, over and above professional development workshops. It has also confirmed that aside from a minor conflict about the place of modelling and instructing in the practice, coaching is reasonably well understood; however, numerous challenges are present in its implementation. It is my hope that the identification of some of these challenges can support the implementation of coaching as it is adopted in the professional setting.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A: OVERVIEW OF ECI IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

What is ECI? ECI is generally understood to mean the services and supports that promote the wellbeing, resilience, development, learning, and social inclusion of infants and young children and their families, in home and community contexts (Alliston, 2007; Shonkoff & Meisels, 2000; World Health Organisation & UNICEF, 2012). ECI activities can be categorised into three tiers (HarvardEducation, 2009; MoE, 2011a). Those that are: 1) universal and inclusive or non-targeted such as wide scale community enrolment in early childhood education; 2) targeted and specialised for identified family or child cohorts such as Triple P, HIPPY, Parent as First Teachers or Hanen programmes; or, 3) individualised, intensive and specialised, for children and families requiring additional programming or supports. For example, use of adaptive equipment, or organisation of the environment to increase learning opportunities and strengthen participation in everyday activities (Early Childhood Intervention Australia (ECIA), 2017). The tiers are typically represented as 80-85%, 10-15%, and 1- 5% respectively, in a response to intervention model. Coaching can occur in any of the three tiers; however, the third area encompasses the type of coaching in focus in this study.

ECI services in Aotearoa New Zealand. ECI services in Aotearoa New Zealand are offered across health, education, social development sectors, by both governmental and non-governmental agencies (Family Services, MSD, 2013; Liberty, 2014), with the majority of three to five year old children receiving these supports within preschool educational settings such as mainstream early childhood centres (Foster-Cohen & van Bysterveldt, 2016). In line with ECI literature, the main service delivery types are centre or organisation-based direct services, or itinerant in-community services which might involve direct or indirect approaches (Dinnebeil, Pretti-Frontczak, & McInerney, 2009). ECI in education settings in Aotearoa New Zealand is offered by the Ministry of Education (80% of services), and independent providers who are funded by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, and other funding bodies (20 % of services). Please see Table 1 for further information about Independent service provision in Aotearoa New Zealand. Ministry of Education services are sometimes delivered in birth to 21 year teams rather

than those that have a specific ECI (0-6 year old) focus, meaning some professionals work across other education sectors in ways not explored in this study.

Table 1: Independent Early Intervention providers Aotearoa New Zealand (2012-2016)

Location	Provider
South Island	CCS Disability Action Conductive Education The Champion Centre
North Island	CCS Disability Action Conductive Education Wellington Early Intervention Trust McKenzie Centre Ohomairangi Trust

Factors known to influence the experience of disability worldwide are also influential in Aotearoa New Zealand. These include poverty, access to services, family and community perspectives on disability, child caregiver interactions, and abuse and welfare (World Health Organisation & UNICEF, 2012). The number of children requiring ECI services in Aotearoa New Zealand is increasing, due to population growth and increases in interlinked family factors (e.g. income disparity, violence, drug and alcohol addiction, and parental mental illness) (Craig et al., 2013; Liberty, 2014). Although there has been recent improvement in collection of data in preschool attendance and child disability and supports in Aotearoa New Zealand, statistics have previously been sparsely reported (Craig et al., 2013; Foster-Cohen & van Bysterveldt, 2016; Kasilingham, Waddington, & Van der Meer, 2019; personal communication, 2013).

Based on New Zealand Disability Survey 2013 findings, eleven percent of children aged fourteen or younger have an impairment or disability (Statistics New Zealand - Tatauranga Aotearoa (Statistics NZ), 2017), with forty-nine percent of children with disabilities, reported to have limiting impairments from birth. Parents or caregivers of children with autism spectrum, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or developmental delay (categorised as 'other cause' – 33%) reported this occurring sometime after birth based on time of diagnosis (Statistics NZ, 2017). Māori and Pacific heritage placed children at higher risk of disability needing support services with Māori boys experiencing higher rates of disability (19%) compared with Māori girls (10%) (Statistics NZ, 2017). Overall, Foster-Cohen and van Bysterveldt

(2016) approximated there to be 21, 000 three to five year old children living with impairment or disability in Aotearoa New Zealand. ECI resourcing in education is allocated for approximately five percent of under five year olds, which in 2011, was equivalent to about 2500 high and complex needs and 9500 moderate-need cases (MOE, 2011b).

ECI services are delivered by diversely trained professionals, from a range of different disciplines. In Aotearoa New Zealand these include health, family support, and social workers, health screeners and promoters, nurses, doctors and medical specialists, psychologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech language therapists, kaitakawaenga and other cultural liaison workers, and specialist educators such as resource teachers for Deaf, Vision, and early intervention teachers.

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APPENDIX B: INFORMATION LETTER

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UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

11 June 2014

"The practice of coaching in the early intervention settings in Aotearoa New Zealand"

Information Sheet for Participants (Phase 1)

Dear Colleagues,

My name is Helen Mataiti and I am a doctoral student in the School of Health Sciences, at the University of Canterbury. This project is part of my PhD study and is being conducted under the supervision of my lead supervisor, Dr Anne van Bysterveldt. In addition to this study, I work part-time at the university in the School of Health Sciences, as a Senior Tutor in the Specialist Teaching programme.

Currently, in Early Intervention (EI) settings in Aotearoa New Zealand, there is a focus on facilitative, interactional practices such as coaching. The purpose of this study is to look at the ways coaching is being learned about and used by early interventionists (EIs) in educational EI settings. It is being carried out in two phases:

- Phase 1 will focus on current understandings of coaching, and how and why the practice has been introduced in the field.
- Phase 2 will look at the process of learning about coaching through a mixed-mode professional learning (PL) programme.

As a participant in Phase 1 of the study you are invited to attend the PL programme that will run concurrently with phase 2 of the study. Note, this PL programme will take place regardless of attendees' participation in Phase 2 of the study.

In this project, data is being collected in a number of different ways, including observations and field notes, individual in-depth interviews, analysis of public and personal documents (eg policies, emails, meeting notes). With the permission of participants in Phase 2 of the project, online data in the form of learning journal entries and forum contributions will also be collected for analysis.

I would like to invite you to participate in Phase 1 of this project. As a participant in this phase of the study you will be asked to:

- take part in at least one face to face interview in a negotiated place (each up to 60 minutes in duration)
- give permission for interviews to be tape-recorded and transcribed
- read and make changes to your interview transcript/s, to ensure you are comfortable with the accuracy of the document
- read, respond to and discuss the analysis of your transcript with the researcher in the interpretation of findings, if you choose to do so
- take part in other communication or discussion as negotiated
- give permission for personal communication relating to the study (eg emails) to be collected as data.

Participation in the study is voluntary. If you participate and decide to withdraw from the study, you have the right to do so at any time without penalty. If you do withdraw, I will do my best to remove any information relating to you, provided this is practically achievable.

I will take care to ensure the confidentiality of all data gathered for this study. Care will also be taken to ensure your anonymity in publications of the findings. However, as you will be aware, in this country the professional community of Early Intervention is quite small, so anonymity cannot be completely assured. To address this, generic descriptors will be used (eg field staff member, semi-rural setting). Ultimately, as a participant you will be given the opportunity to decide how you would like to be identified. Data will be securely stored in password protected facilities and locked storage at the University of Canterbury for five years following the study. It will then be destroyed.

The findings of this study may be used to inform the development of future PL programmes in coaching. Findings of the study will be reported internationally at conferences and in EI academic and professional journals.

Regular reports on the study and opportunity to discuss these, will be made available to you as a participant. If you wish to receive ongoing updates about the study please tick the appropriate box on the consent form.

This project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. If you have any questions about the study, please contact either myself, or my supervisor Dr Anne Van Bysterveldt by phone (03) 364 2056 or email anne.vanbysterveldt@canterbury.ac.nz.

If you have a complaint about the study, you may contact: The Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

If you agree to participate in this study, please complete the attached consent form and return it by email or in the envelope provided.

Thank you for taking the time to consider your participation in this study

Yours sincerely

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APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Early Interview Questions

- From your own perspective, how would you describe / define coaching?
    - What do you perceive the characteristics of coaching to be?
- In what ways has your understanding developed?
- In what ways do you think coaching is relevant in ECI settings
    - In the current Aotearoa New Zealand context? Policy / legislation?
    - How might and EIT use coaching in everyday practice?
- In what ways has coaching practice been introduced and developed within ECI practice in your work context?
    - Are there any specific resources that have been used to support this process?

Later Interview Questions:

- When you started to learn about coaching can you recall what you thought you would learn?
- Of the things you've learned about coaching, what stands out for you?
- How do you think this is reflected in your practice?
- What helped you learn?
- Could anything have been done differently?
- (How do you think you might use coaching in the future?)

APPENDIX D: DATA ANALYSIS EXAMPLES

Coding Excerpts

P2:	Um I think the mai…. First characteristic that differentiates from other ways that we might interact with people when we're doing early intervention work… is that you ah you begin by being very open about finding out what the person knows or what their perspective on the situation is…um. And you build, build your understanding into what your next step is. I kind of see that as the critical component that's different…yeah about other ways, you know like, like previously you might have had a teaching model, so you teach about how to … you teach someone something. You give a strategy, you'd provide a thing um whereas coaching is much more of an open *relationship-based interaction*, where you build an understanding together,	Whole paragraph - Defining coaching Comparative How coaching differs from other approaches - Coaching vs teaching - Teaching as "previous' old approach - Coaching not giving a strategy or providing anything like teaching Coaching process - Identification of coachees knowledge or perspective - Building - understanding of next steps together, an understanding together, building on what is known - affirming of coachees current knowledge and skills Coaching Characteristics - Openness - Relationship-based
	but at the same time you're…as the "coach" *(raising hands to make inverted commas)*, you are building on and affirming what the person already knows.	

P4:	But, often I'm also coaching, supporting those adult relationships more than anything cause that's where the tricky parts can happen..	ESWS.
H:	Yes yeah	
P4:	Um they may be wonderful with the children, but yo..The poor things, they've got to go into all these centres, who've all got their own philosophies. So just coaching them, supporting them with that..	ESWS.
H:	yeah	
P4:	Um preschool teachers, kindergarten teachers…	preschool teacher.
H:	yeah	
P4:	Yeah just being… I certainly don't think of myself as expert and they know the children better than me, so it's more just a, a team thing really. That's how I've been seeing the coaching. But I'm probably at a beginner stage…	self percepti. non expert. within team self evaluati

Analytical Memo Excerpt

Analysis Process

Coding for analysis was carried out in a preliminary fashion on the computer on a formatted sheet. Excerpts were variously underlined, highlighted or bolded (if all in the same section to denote a separate coding. The following themes were identified:

1) Coaching description
   - Definition
     - "what coaching is"
     - "what coaching is not"
   - Type or approach
   - Characteristics / Components / Process
   - Expectations, Roles and responsibilities
2) Coaching Relationships (could be collapsed)
   - In EC
   - With ESW
   - With families
3) Coaching context
   - Rationale and motivations for Coaching
     - empowerment
   - Links with coaching
     - EIPF
     - Engagement with families
     - IPs
     - Priority children (e.g. government directive) (see p 17 of script)
4) Professional Identity
   - Coaching as a way of enacting philosophy
   - Beliefs
   - Development of
5) Professional Learning
   - Content
   - Shift in practice / transformation
   - Methods
   - Resources (teacher as resource, team as resource)
   - People (individual, group, team, consultant)
   - Practitioner responsibility
   - Challenges e.g. geography
6) Coaching in Use / Coaching in Action
7) Evaluation

ANALYTICAL MEMO 3 Helen Mataiti 22473477

Data Analysis table

Theme: Challenges			
Challenge of Context	Coaching	Promoting independence	1
		Need for flexibility	2
		Families realities	2
	PL		2
Challenge of Understanding coaching		terminology	2
	Strategies	questioning	3 (2 participants
		Goal setting	1
		In the moment	1
	Position toward underlying principles	Believing in the other	4 (3 participants)
		Prioritising the relationship	
		Strengths based	2 same as family realities
Developing awareness	Reflective process		2
Challenge of Theory to Practice			11
Challenge of PL	Resources	Time	19
		Financial	1
		Personnel	2
	PL design		15
		Self-directed learning	5
		Assessment	2
		discomfort	3 (1 person)
	Overload	Information Overload (parents / learners)	1 13
		Practitioner (does this relate)	2
		personal	9 (1 person)
the process? See Participant 1	Trusting the practice (as effective)		4
Challenge of Sociocultural aspects			6 (4 participants)
Professional challenges		Interest / motivation in PL	4 (1 participant)
	How do these relate? Relook at this	Roles + responsibilities (changing / establishing)	13 (4 participants)
		identity	10
		Professional practice	

Yellow = main, blue emerging.... 31 March 2019

APPENDIX E: ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE

Secretary, Lynda Griffioen
Email: human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

Ref: 2014/31/ERHEC

11 July 2014

Helen Mataiti
School of Health Sciences
UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

Dear Helen

Thank you for providing the revised documents in support of your application to the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. I am very pleased to inform you that your research proposal "The practice of coaching in early intervention settings in Aotearoa New Zealand" has been granted ethical approval.

Please note that this approval is subject to the incorporation of the amendments you have provided in your email of 10 July 2014.

Should circumstances relevant to this current application change you are required to reapply for ethical approval.

If you have any questions regarding this approval, please let me know.

We wish you well for your research.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Surtees
Chair
Educational Research Human Ethics Committee

"Please note that Ethical Approval and/or Clearance relates only to the ethical elements of the relationship between the researcher, research participants and other stakeholders. The granting of approval or clearance by the Ethical Clearance Committee should not be interpreted as comment on the methodology, legality, value or any other matters relating to this research."

F E S

APPENDIX F: CONSENT FORM

Room 122, Waimairi Building,
School of Health Sciences, College of Education
Dovedale Campus,

Telephone: +64 3 3670716
Email: helen.mataiti@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

"The practice of coaching in the early intervention settings in Aotearoa New Zealand"

Consent Form for Participants (Phases 1 & 2)

	Yes
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 any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and that any published or reported results will not identify me, but because the professional community of Early Intervention in Aotearoa New Zealand is quite small, anonymity cannot be completely assured. However, steps will be taken by the researcher to achieve this to the greatest extent possible.	☐
I understand steps have been taken to ensure my participation / non-participation will have no influence on assessment outcomes ensure (*Student participants only*)	☐
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 agree to participate in at least one face to face interview and other communication as negotiated.	☐
I agree for my interview/s to be tape recorded and transcribed.	☐
I understand I am invited to read and amend the transcription of my interview/s, and can choose to be involved in the interpretation of findings.	☐
I give permission for my online personal journal and forum contributions to be accessed as sources of data. (*Phase 2 participants only*)	☐
I would like to receive updates and reports on the findings of this study, and have provided my email details below.	☐
I understand that parts of this research may be used in presentations, and professional or academic journals, and that I will be informed if this is the case.	☐

I understand that if I require further information I can contact the researcher, Helen Mataiti, or lead supervisor, Dr Anne van Bysterveldt. And, if I have any complaints, I can contact 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: _____(for updates)

Please return this completed consent form to Helen Mataiti in the envelope provided, or by email to helen.mataiti@pg.canterbury.ac.nz, as soon as possible.