

The Transition Learning and Development Statement:
multiple readings and kaleidoscopic possibilities.

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Abstract

In Australia in 2009, the early childhood profession witnessed the debut of “Belonging, being and becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia” (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, (DEEWR), 2009). For early childhood educators in Victoria, this was followed by the concurrent introduction of the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, (DEECD), 2009a) and the Transition Learning and Development Statement (TLDS). The introduction of the TLDS was informed by international literature that recognises the significance of transition for children, families and educators (Dockett & Perry, 1999; Early, Pianta & Cox, 1999; Margetts, 2002; Dunlop & Fabian, 2007 & Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY), 2013). This signalled a renewed emphasis on transition within a Victorian context.

The purpose of this research was to explore how the TLDS has been used to fulfil the intended dual purpose of making transition to primary school smoother for children and creating a shared professional language and relationship between early childhood and primary school educators. Accordingly, this thesis draws on in-depth interviews with early childhood and primary school educators to explore how they understand and engage with the TLDS. The subsequent data analysis revealed that early childhood and primary school educators operated within shared dominant discourses and that this promoted the building of mutual professional relationships.

Post-structural understandings of knowledge, truth and power were drawn on to elucidate this data in two ways. Firstly, through the positioning of the TLDS as a mechanism of power, the dominant discourses of children, families and educators that circulate throughout the TLDS were investigated. Secondly, the privileging of the TLDS as the single, mandated transition practice within the state of Victoria, Australia was also interrogated. Lastly, Foucauldian concepts were drawn upon to illuminate that power is ever shifting and can elicit multiple readings and a kaleidoscope of possibilities for how transition to school can be understood and enacted.

Declaration

This is to certify that:

- (i) the thesis comprises only my original work towards the degree of Master of Education except where indicated in the preface*
- (ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,*
- (iii) the thesis is 24, 200 words as approved by the Research Higher Degrees Committee.*

Signature:.....

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My warm and humble thanks to Kylie, for always going above and beyond, and for providing safe spaces and multiple opportunities for me to find my own way.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALP	Australian Labor Party
AusVELS	Australian and Victorian Essential Learning Strands
CEIEC	Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood
CSF	Child Snapshot Form
DEECD	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
EYLF	Early Years Learning Framework
LDC	Long Day Care
PLS	Plain Language Statement
PPS	Prep grade in Primary School
SAK	Stand Alone Kindergarten
SES	Socio-economic Status
TLDS	Transition Learning and Development Statement
VCAA	Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority
VELS	Victorian Essential Learning Strands
VEYLDF	Victorian Learning and Development Framework

GLOSSARY

Kindergarten: within a Victorian context, kindergarten refers to the government funded program that is available to all children who turn four years old by the 30th April of the year they begin kindergarten. Currently, all children who meet this criterion are eligible to attend a kindergarten program for 15 hours per week within a stand-alone kindergarten or a kindergarten program delivered within a long day care setting (DEECD, 2013a). The development and implementation of kindergarten programs aims to support and promote learning that corresponds with the practice principles and learning outcomes outlined within the EYLF and VEYDLF.

Prep grade: in Victoria, refers to the first year of primary school. The compulsory school starting age is six years old. However, all children who turn five years old by the 30th April of the year they begin school are eligible to enrol (DEECD, 2013b). The primary school curriculum is informed by the AusVELS (Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority (VCAA), 2013). This identifies the prep grade as a foundational year where children develop knowledge and skills that become the basis for future learning. These include, but are not limited to literacy, numeracy and physical and social competencies.

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INTRODUCTION

As an early childhood educator working with four year old children, my firsthand experience of writing a TLDS came in October 2009 following the simultaneous introduction of the Australian Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, (DEEWR), 2009) and the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, (DEECD), 2009a). At the time I only had a vague idea of how the EYLF and VEYLDF would impact on my practice and my reservations were only further compounded once I was engaging with the frameworks more closely. Not only were there two new documents to familiarise myself with, a Transition Learning and Development Statement (TLDS) also needed to be completed for every four year old child going to school in 2010 by the end of November.

The TLDS is a 3-part document that is to be completed by the child, their family and an early childhood educator. For each stakeholder there are different expectations of how they will contribute to the document (DEECD, 2009b). Early childhood educators are obliged to complete the largest section of the document and report on a child's progress relative to the five learning outcomes within the EYLF and VEYLDF. Evidently, the completion of the TLDS is intrinsically linked to a good working knowledge of the frameworks that early childhood educators were only now seeing for the first time. Additionally, DEECD training was only available to one or two qualified early childhood educators from every service. How were educators to complete the TLDS without adequate support to engage with, and understand, the role of the frameworks in such a short space of time?

On reflection I can admit that my initial frustrations were emotionally founded in a time where I felt personally disenchanted with the early childhood profession. This was only exacerbated by my attendance at a professional development session to support early childhood and primary school educators through the process of writing and interpreting the TLDS. Many of the primary school educators present commented that the session was a waste of their time. In

their minds, the TLDS would not provide the information they wanted in an accessible and time efficient way. After lunch, none of the primary school educators returned. Only then did the early childhood educators share their apprehensions. What information were they supposed to include? How were they meant to write it? The many unpaid hours spent completing the TLDS was a bone of contention, only aggravated by claims from the primary school educators that the TLDSs wouldn't be read. What was the point of spending so much time on this written document if they weren't going to be read, let alone used? In the end, it was the need to contain or redirect my frustration and anger that became the impetus for my research.

I will bravely confess that going into the research I expected that early childhood educators would resent writing the TLDS, that primary school educators would resist reading or using the TLDS and that the gap between early childhood and primary school teachers would still exist, and possibly widen. I admit that these expectations were pessimistic, but I did *hope* to be surprised and re-inspired. And I was.

Overview

In chapter one I provide a literature review that looks broadly at international and national understandings of transition to school in order to explore the use of the TLDS as a single, mandated practice within a Victorian context. Chapter two outlines the methodology used to underpin my research and presents my rationale for the use of in-depth interviews. In chapter three I introduce my conceptual framework and highlight the relevance of drawing on post-structural theories within this research. Chapter four provides a discussion on Foucauldian concepts of discourse and power, and examines how these have been used to read and analyse the research data. Chapter five elaborates on chapter four, reframing power in a way that draws on multiple readings of the data to illuminate kaleidoscopic possibilities. Finally, in chapter six I summarise the findings of my research and discuss the subsequent implications.

Chapter 1

Literature review

This literature review will provide an overview of the substantial body of international and national literature that informs current understandings of transition to school. In doing this it will outline definitions of transition, highlight the purpose and different approaches to transition and consider the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders involved in transition. Additionally, Australian contexts for transition to school will be reviewed with reference to the impact of educational reform on the development of key policy documents. In particular, the role of the EYLF, the VEYLDF and the Transition initiative (DEECD, 2009a) in informing transition will be discussed. Finally, as the single, mandated Victorian transition practice, the potential value of the TLDS to facilitate smooth transition and create shared professional relationships and language between early childhood and primary school educators will be examined.

An overview of international and national research on transition to school

The transition from an early childhood to primary school setting is deemed to be a significant milestone in the lives of children and families, as well as early childhood and primary school educators (Dockett & Perry, 1999; Early et al., 1999; Margetts, 2002; Saracho & Spodek, 2003; Dunlop & Fabian, 2007; White & Sharp, 2007; PACEY, 2013). It is commonly recognised and accepted that children experience multiple transitions throughout their daily lives (Johansson, 2002; Griebel & Niesel, 2002; Peters, 2000; Holdsworth, 2010). Neuman (2002) refers to vertical transitions that happen between settings/contexts and horizontal transitions that occur within settings/contexts. Examples of these might include the transition from home to an early childhood setting and the transition between classrooms in a school setting. Transitions might also be seen as informal, with movement from work to home, or formal, with movement occurring between institutions such as home to hospital (Centre for Equity and

Innovation in Early Childhood (CEIEC), 2008). Accordingly, transition can be seen as context dependent but broadly, it refers to the movement from one state to another. For the purpose of this research, transition will refer to the movement of children from any early childhood setting, which may be sessional kindergarten, play group or full day care, into their first year of primary school.

The movement from an early childhood setting into a primary school setting is considered a major transition and the subsequent positive or negative effects can have lasting implications for a child's future progress and success (Margetts, 2002; Dockett & Perry, 2004a; Fabian & Dunlop, 2006). However, it is readily acknowledged that transition is a complex and multi-faceted process that is influenced by the multiple perspectives of the various stakeholders involved (Fabian 2000; Neuman, 2002; Fabian, 2007; Einarsdottir, Dockett & Perry, 2008; Mirkhil, 2010a; Petriwskyj, 2010). For each of these stakeholders – children, families, early childhood and primary school educators and the broader community – there are different perceptions and understandings about what constitutes a smooth transition.

The growing body of literature on children's perspectives on transition (O'Kane, 2007; Dunlop & Fabian, 2007; Lam & Pollard, 2007; MacDonald, 2009; Mirkhil, 2010b; Einarsdottir, 2011; Loizou, 2011) highlights that children are primarily concerned with friendships, (Peters, 2000; Ledger, Smith & Rich, 2000; Dockett & Perry, 2004b) what to expect of school and what the school might expect of them (Peters, 2000; Dockett & Perry, 2004b; White & Sharp, 2007; Griebel & Niesel, 2009). Parents also have concerns about continuity (Peters, 2000; Margetts, 2002) and they want their children to separate well from their families, succeed academically and have a positive relationship with their teacher (Dockett & Perry, 2004a; CEIEC, 2009; Shields 2009). By contrast, both early childhood and primary school educators believe it is critical for children to have certain knowledge and skills as they enter into the school setting. However deciding on, defining and measuring what these are, presents the biggest challenge (Peters, 2000, Dockett & Perry 2004a; Fabian & Dunlop, 2007; CEIEC, 2009). Neuman (2002) and Broström (2002) posit that this reflects an historic

disparity based on divided philosophical viewpoints that make sharing information problematic (Dunlop, 2003; Einarsdottir, 2006; Griebel & Niesel, 2009).

While research clearly demonstrates that each stakeholder has contrasting viewpoints on transition, three consistent and fundamental issues appear to be emerging: the notion of continuity between settings, the significance of identity and relationships and the necessity for collaborative communication. Continuity plays an important role in transition (Kagan, 1991; Neuman, 2002; OECD, 2002; Dunlop, 2003; Dunlop & Fabian, 2007, Griebel & Niesel 2009; Barblett, Barratt-Pugh, Kilgallon & Maloney, 2011, Petriwskyj, 2013a). It encompasses aspects such as the physical environment, length of day, teaching approaches and curriculum delivery (Peters 2000; Margetts, 2002;) and it acknowledges transition as an ongoing process as opposed to a single, discrete event (Ramey & Ramey, 1998).

Inherent to maintaining continuity is the ability to build and nurture responsive and reciprocal relationships (Dockett & Perry, 2001; Dunlop, 2003; Margetts, 2000; Margetts, 2007; Griebel & Niesel, 2009; Shields, 2009; Binstadt, 2010; Petriwskyj, 2013b). The nature of these relationships is also critically linked to communication between all the stakeholders. To address the concerns of those involved, this communication needs to include all the stakeholders, be meaningful and ongoing and involve the exchange of relevant information (Fabian 2000; La Paro, Pianta & Cox, 2000; Margetts, 2002; Dockett & Perry, 2004a; Dunlop & Fabian, 2007; Giallo, Treyvaud, Matthews & Kienhuis, 2010).

Subsequently, contemporary research literature places a significant emphasis on using an ecological model to inform successful and effective transition to school (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000; Dunlop, 2003; Dunlop & Fabian, 2007; Margetts, 2007, CEIEC, 2008; Astbury, 2009; Ebbeck, Yim & Lee, 2010). An ecological model shifts the focus from requisite skill sets that have traditionally been used to measure the effectiveness of transition, to a child's relationships and how these inform successful transition. This places an emphasis on

transition practices that are responsive to local contexts, incorporate the perspectives of all stakeholders involved in transition and establish and foster respectful relationships (Fabian, 2007; Griebel & Niesel, 2009; Binstadt, 2010; Noel, 2011).

Accordingly, the focus on a single transition practice as the most important is problematic. Research highlights that there is ample information about what makes a good transition program and that drawing on multiple transition practices is important for successful transition. Examples of commonly used transition practices include pre-school children attending transition programs within primary school settings, reciprocal visits for children and educators between educational settings, individual meetings held at primary schools with children and families prior to the commencement of school and the exchange of information, written or verbal, between early childhood and primary school educators (Margetts, 2007; LoCasale-Crouch, Mashburn, Downer & Pianta, 2008; Rous, Hallam, McCormick & Cox, 2010; Petriwskyj, 2010).

However, while the majority of research advocates for the use of a range of transition practices, there is limited evidence to support that any one transition practice is the most effective for facilitating smooth transition (Early, Pianta, Taylor & Cox, 2001; Margetts, 2002; Kirk-Downey & Perry, 2006; Margetts, 2007; Einarsdottir et al., 2008; Petriwskyj, 2010; Noel, 2011). In considering a range of transition practices, Early et al.,(1999) found that “despite the widespread use of (these) practices and beliefs in their effectiveness, there has been no systematic research devoted to documenting the effectiveness of these activities” (p.27.). This suggests that although the literature insists that measurement and evaluation of transition practices are inherent to determining their success (Conn-Powers, Ross-Allen & Holburn, 1990; Early, et. al, 2001; Margetts, 2000; CEIEC 2008, Astbury, 2009; Nolan, Hamm, McCartin & Hunt, 2009) minimal research has been done on evaluating transition practices.

Transition to school within an Australian context

In an Australian context, early childhood education drew increasing attention in the lead up to the 2007 Federal Election. Based on the premise that “to compete in the new world economy and guarantee our future prosperity, Australia needs an education revolution” (Rudd & Macklin, 2007, p.2.), the Australian Labor Party (ALP) put forward their “Plan for Early Childhood” (Rudd, Macklin, Roxon & Smith, 2007). Within this policy document the ALP proposed the development of “a nationally consistent *Early Years Learning Framework*”, (Rudd et al., 2007, p.10.).

Following the success of the ALP in the 2007 Federal election, the EYLF was launched in September 2009, alongside the VEYLDF. Underpinned by the *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development* (DEECD 2008) the VEYLDF is intended to guide the direction for early years reform across the next five years (DEECD, 2009a). The shared vision of these documents focuses on all children benefiting from the best start to life and becoming successful, productive and informed global citizens (DEECD, 2009a; DEEWR, 2009). This is to be achieved by providing the highest quality of care and education according to the principles and outcomes outlined within these documents. There is also a heavy emphasis placed on ensuring that children make a smooth transition into primary school so that “by the time Victorian children start school they will be ready to learn at school and schools will be ready for them” (DEECD, 2008, p.11).

A Victorian context for transition to school

In Victoria, three principal documents were used to inform the DEECD’s development of the transition initiative. Prior to its implementation in September 2009, these included; “Transition: A Positive Start to School” (CEIEC, 2008) and “Evaluation of Transition: A Positive Start to School Pilots” (Astbury, 2009). Subsequent to the completion of the first round of the TLDSs, the third document “Outcomes & Indicators of a Positive Start to School” was published in December 2009 (Nolan, et al.). Collectively, these three documents highlight the

significance of drawing on an ecological model for supporting transition and drawing on a broad range of transition practices or strategies as opposed to a single, best practice.

In light of this, the CEIEC (2008) and Astbury (2009) acknowledged the potential value of the TLDS as one of a range of promising transition practices. However, the CEIEC (2008) recommended that a greater emphasis needed to be placed on incorporating children's voices in the TLDS and that the TLDS needed to be specifically tailored for Indigenous children, children with disabilities and children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Astbury (2009) also stressed that ongoing support for educators was fundamental and he recommended that this include the provision of; "resource kits, templates, manuals, training and technical assistance" (p. 38). Additionally, Nolan, et al., (2009) identified a clear distinction between measuring school readiness in terms of learning and development skills and the outcomes of a positive transition to school for children, families and educators. Combined with the significant lack of evidence-based research to support the effectiveness of any particular transition practice for making transition to school more successful, the ongoing evaluation of transition practices and how they measured positive outcomes of transition was deemed critical (Nolan, et al., 2009).

In response to these findings "The Transition: A Positive Start to School Resource Kit" (DEECD, 2009c) was introduced in Victoria to support early childhood professionals. This kit is one element of "The Transition: A Positive Start to School" initiative and the over-arching goal is to "improve experiences of starting school by enhancing the development and delivery of transition programs" (DEECD, 2009c, 1:1). The document subsequently highlights the importance of transition and the significant role well-planned transition programs have in facilitating a smoother transition for children and families. Pursuant to this, the VEYLDF advocates that "A combination of approaches and processes is required to support effective transition" (p.33), and ten promising practices are identified within the Transition: A Positive Start to School Resource Kit. These include; reciprocal visits for children, reciprocal visits for educators, transition

statements and meetings, joint professional development, local transition networks, buddy programs, family involvement, learning programs responsive to children, social story-boards and community-level transition timetables (DEECD, 2009c).

The Transition Learning and Development Statement – a mandated transition practice

Despite the recommendation to draw on a range of promising transition practices, in Victoria all early childhood educators are mandated to complete a TLDS for every child that will attend prep in the subsequent year. As previously mentioned, it is the mandating of this practice that was the impetus for my research specifically on the TLDS. Accordingly, I attempted to source research literature that was overtly related to the TLDS using key terms such as; transition statements, transition reports, written reports, checklists and written statements. The only other reference I could find to a specific written document to support transition was the Child Snapshot Form (CSF) referred to in research conducted by O’Kane and Hayes (2010). However, the CSF was developed collaboratively by early childhood and primary school educators and used explicitly to flag children with developmental or behavioural concerns. The CSF was also used in conjunction with individual parent interviews and face-to-face meetings between professionals not as a single transition practice (O’Kane & Hayes, 2010). Although I was able to find additional general information on the exchange of written information (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007; Margetts, 2007; LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2008; Rous, Hallam, McCormick & Cox, 2010), there was an absence of literature explicitly connected to the value of the exchange of written documentation as a transition practice.

The only current published research literature on transition that makes explicit reference to the TLDS is “Final Report. Evaluation of Transition: A Positive Start to School Initiative” (SuccessWorks, 2010). This evaluation drew on quantitative data gathered from on-line surveys and qualitative data gathered from early childhood site visits, primary school site visits and parent/guardian focus groups and telephone interviews (refer to Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: A summary of findings from the “Final Report. Evaluation of Transition: A Positive Start to School Initiative”
(SuccessWorks, 2010).

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	USING THE TLDS (%)			TLDS PROCESSES	
	Completed	Received	Used	Challenges identified	
				Percentage	Examples
Parents 922	85.2%	Not applicable		Not applicable	
Early childhood educators 569	90%	Not applicable		23.1%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> time taken to write the TLDS insufficient training to engage with the TLDS parent engagement strength based language relevance to primary school educator
Primary school educators 1029	Not applicable	88.7%	53.6%	36.8%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> strength based language the length and wordiness of the document failure of the TLDS to arrive in time to inform the transition program

There were two key recommendations to emerge from this research. The first identified the necessity for the provision of increased support for all stakeholders to develop a greater understanding of their roles and responsibilities in transition processes. To achieve this, the second recommendation recognised that this would require the implementation of improved support measures for the stakeholders. Accordingly, a range of recommendations was developed for the DEECD, early childhood services and schools (refer to D1-D13, pp4-5; S1-S3, p.5, SuccessWorks, 2010).

In order to ascertain if and how these recommendations have been addressed, a comprehensive search of the DEECD and Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority (VCAA) websites was carried out. The same two current research reports on transition were found on both sites: “Research into Practices to Support a Positive Start to School” (Smith, Kotsanas, Farrelly & Alexander, 2013) and “Outcomes and Indicators of a Positive Start to School: Development of Framework and Tools” (Murdoch Children’s Research Institute & Victoria University, 2013). While there is a cursory mention of the TLDS within both of these documents, there is limited information about how they are being used by early childhood and primary school educators to support transition.

That said, on the DEECD website there is a growing body of professional development literature aimed at supporting early childhood educators and families to engage with the TLDS (DEECD, 2009d; DEECD, 2013c). Some examples include: “How to write and interpret the Transition Learning and Development Statement: Professional Development Booklet” (DEECD, 2009e) and “Strength based approach. A guide to writing Transition Learning and Development Statements” (DEECD, 2010).

As their titles suggest, the key intent of this literature is to address structural and practical concerns pertaining to the completion and use of the TLDS. Accordingly, they provide ‘How to’ and ‘FAQ’ style information. While this information is valuable and responds to some of the key recommendations from the “Final Report. Evaluation of Transition: A Positive Start to School Initiative”

(SuccessWorks, 2010) there is an obvious lack of theorisation around why early childhood and primary school educators understand and engage with the TLDS in particular ways. Emerging contemporary transition literature recognises that transition as a concept is being contested within diverse educational contexts (Bartlett, Arnold, Shallwani & Gowani, 2010; O’Kane & Hayes; 2010; Dunlop, 2013; O’Kane, 2013 & Kienig & Margetts, 2013). Accordingly, this literature calls for a new approach to transition that theorises and reconceptualises transition practices so that they can reflect a kaleidoscopic understanding of the multiple experiences of children, families and educators (Kagan, 2010; Petriwskyj & Greishaber, 2011; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2013; Margetts & Keinig 2013).

Given the lack of clarity regarding the mandating of the TLDS and the absence of current, theorised research literature on the TLDS, my research proposes to draw on the experiences of early childhood and primary school educators to examine the major question: “How do early childhood and primary school educators understand and use the TLDS?” The following minor questions will support this exploration:

- How does the TLDS address the key issues identified by the relevant stakeholders?
- What are the benefits and challenges of using the TLDS for early childhood and primary school educators?
- How does language support or disengage early childhood and primary school educators’ engagement with the TLDS?
- What are the dominant discourses that circulate through the TLDS?

How I will investigate these research questions will be examined in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2

Methodology

The intention of my research is to interrogate the privileging of the TLDS as the only mandated transition practice within Victoria and investigate how the TLDS is used to facilitate smooth transition and create a shared professional language and relationship between early childhood and primary school educators. In doing this it aims to explore the lived experiences of early childhood and primary school educators by drawing on their understandings of and engagement with the TLDS. Accordingly, a qualitative methodological framework underpins this research (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005; Liamputtong, 2009).

Qualitative research

Qualitative research focuses on the quality or meaning of the phenomenon being researched, by seeking to know what people's personal experience is of a particular phenomenon and how this is significant for them (Hughes, 2001; Rolfe & MacNaughton, 2001; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005; Corbin & Strauss, 2007). This allows for the consideration of a diversity of contexts and social, cultural and historical constructs that enables the utilisation of multiple methods and the ensuing identification of multiple truths (Liamputtong, 2009). This is relevant to my research as it aims to understand, interpret and explain any findings around early childhood and primary school educators' personalised experiences of using the TLDS (Hughes, 2001; Kamberelis & Dimitriades, 2005).

In-depth interviews

For the purpose of this research in-depth interviews were used to collect the data. These provided the opportunity to incorporate both open-ended general and more focused questions in order to elicit a richer, more contextualised discussion of the co-researchers' perspectives (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). In-depth interviews also allowed me to become personally

involved in the interviews, enabling immediate responsiveness to what each co-researcher was saying (Silverman, 2010; Seidman, 2006). Accordingly, I was able to follow the co-researcher's lead and pose follow up questions that were used to facilitate further understanding, exploration or clarification of unexpected points raised in the interview (Liamputtong, 2009; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Dowling & Brown 2010; King & Horrocks, 2010). This allowed for a more comprehensive examination of the research topic because the co-researchers were able to share specific and significant information based on their individual experiences of engaging with and using the TLDS (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Kervin, Vialle, Herrington & Okely, 2006; Liamputtong, 2009; Dowling & Brown 2010).

Ethics approval

In order to undertake my research, ethics approval from both the University of Melbourne and the DEECD was required. Given that my research was with adults who were volunteering to participate and who were able to provide informed consent (refer to Appendix A), the research was categorised as low-risk. However, due to the small sample size, there is always the possibility that co-researchers or their respective services could be recognised within the educational community, so anonymity could not be guaranteed. Accordingly, maintaining confidentiality and privacy was paramount.

I used a range of coding protocols to maintain individual and service confidentiality and anonymity. With regards to maintaining individual confidentiality, I gave each co-researcher the opportunity to choose a pseudonym. In cases where co-researchers were indifferent about this, I designated a pseudonym with the co-researcher's consent. To maintain service confidentiality, I firstly coded services according to the type of setting. Secondly, where multiple co-researchers from the same service types were interviewed, numbered sequential codes were used based on the order in which the interviews were conducted (refer to Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Summary of coding protocols used to maintain co-researcher and service confidentiality and anonymity.

Service type		Code	Pseudonym	Sequenced service codes
Early childhood	Kindergarten in Long Day Care	LDC	Anne	LDC1
			Jane	LDC2
			Pink	LDC3
			Barbara	LDC4
	Stand alone Kindergarten	SAK	Suzanne	SAK1
Prep grade in Primary School		PPS	Phoebe	PPS1
			Louise	PPS2
			Jacqui	PPS3
			Rachel	PPS4
			Mary	PPS5

All of the co-researchers were also made aware in the Plain Language Statement (PLS) (refer to Appendix B) that they could withdraw from the research at any time. Furthermore, once I had transcribed the interviews, I emailed these to each of the co-researchers and they were given the opportunity to edit or delete any of the data recorded in their transcripts. In doing this, co-researchers were able to endorse how their perspectives were being represented within the research.

Data collection

Sampling and sample size

As the primary aim of qualitative research is to explore and understand the personalised meanings that individual participants have around particular research questions, it is common to draw on purposive sampling and small sample sizes (Liamputtong, 2009; Patton, 2002; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

This resonates with my intention to draw on the personal and lived experiences of using the TLDS in order to provide contextual understandings and interpretations. For this reason, the sample size for my research included a total of ten co-researchers: five from early childhood settings and five from primary school settings (refer to Table 2.1). The focus on quality rather than quantity, makes my small sample size more appropriate as the data collected illuminated the chosen research question and provided a more comprehensive knowledge of the questions being investigated (Liamputtong, 2009; Patton, 2002).

Recruitment

The first step in the recruitment process was writing the recruitment advertisement (refer to Appendix C). This included a broad introduction to myself, an outline of the proposed research, its intended purpose, the participant selection criteria, the preliminary expectations of participants involved in the research process and the relevant contact details. The expression of interest was then e-mailed to select professional networks including Children's Services Departments and Educator Professional Networks within a range of local councils and organisations such as Community Childcare and Kindergarten Cluster Managers.

Eligibility and co-researcher criteria

While there were no co-researcher criteria with regards to age, gender or ethnicity, because my research was specifically on understanding and engaging with the TLDS and only qualified educators were meant to write and use the TLDS, it was critical that potential co-researchers met the following criteria:

- Bachelor qualified educator currently employed in an early childhood setting
- at least one year's experience writing a TLDS

OR

- Bachelor qualified educator currently employed as a prep grade educator in a primary school setting
- at least one year's experience reading, interpreting and using a TLDS

Accordingly, educators who were eligible and expressed an interest in the research were invited to make contact with me directly. As expressions of interest were received, I made email or telephone contact in order to introduce myself and to organise when an interview could be conveniently conducted. As I was conscious of the busy schedules and tight timelines of both early childhood and primary school educators, I asked co-researchers to nominate days, times and venues that would best suit them. This included providing co-researchers with the opportunity to meet at a location of their choice outside of their service setting. Prior to meeting with each co-researcher, I emailed them a copy of the PLS (refer to Appendix B) and Consent Form (refer to Appendix A). This provided the co-researchers with greater detail about the purpose of the research, the level of involvement of the co-researcher and the specific ways they would be engaged with the research. It also outlined ethical issues of privacy, data storage, consent and confidentiality.

The response from the early childhood community was immediate and I had recruited five early childhood co-researchers and scheduled interviews within a fortnight of e-mailing the expression of interest. However, it was much more difficult to recruit primary school educators. This was mainly due to the ongoing "working to rule" industrial action taking place early in 2013 that rendered primary school educators unavailable outside of their contracted hours. After a month without any responses, I made contact with some colleagues in the inner Northern region and threw myself at their mercy. Did they know anyone that could help? This paid off slowly, and I finally recruited five primary school co-researchers. However, because they are all from the

inner Northern region, this will impact on the analysis and interpretation of the data.

Conducting the interviews

Each co-researcher participated in a one-to-one in-depth interview that lasted between sixty to ninety minutes. In this time I posed a series of general and specific questions (refer to Appendix D) and the co-researcher's responses were recorded using a digital recorder. The preliminary interview questions were designed to generate demographic data about each co-researcher's age, gender, qualifications and service context. Meanwhile, interview questions one to four were aimed at exploring each co-researcher's understandings of school readiness, transition and the requisite skills and knowledge seen as significant in relation to this. Finally, the remaining interview questions concentrated specifically on how the TLDS was understood and engaged with by early childhood and primary school educators. Accordingly, these questions were slightly different to reflect that early childhood educators write the TLDS and primary school educators interpret and use the TLDS.

Positioning myself and my co-researchers

The shift from participant to co-researcher

Pre-data collection, I had been using the word 'participants' when referring to the educators who might engage with my research. However, throughout the conducting of the interviews I was getting to know my colleagues in new and interesting ways. I was beginning to see them in a different light, particularly my colleagues in primary school. I started to feel uncomfortable with the word 'participant', although I couldn't seem to articulate why. It was only after reading about Foucault's docile bodies (Foucault, 1977) that I recognised that my discomfort was about how this word positioned my colleagues as nameless and faceless entities that were somehow separate to the research. This undermined

their generosity, their professional expertise and their best intentions. In order to honour this I made the decision to use the word 'co-researcher' instead. To me this was more respectful and it more closely reflected the intention of my research to be collaborative and draw on multiple understandings and perspectives.

Introducing my colleagues

Each co-researcher provided background information about their personal teaching experiences and service contexts (refer to Table 2.2. and Table 2.3). All of the co-researchers also noted that the majority of the families using their respective services are local residents. This is seen as a contributing factor to the "strength" of their individual community. Three of the early childhood services and three of the primary schools catered primarily to Anglo, middle class families. The remaining two of each service type accommodated student cohorts with greater cultural, linguistic and SES diversity. This data provided additional and meaningful information that contributed to the way that the data was considered and interpreted.

Table 2.2: Summary of early childhood co-researcher demographic data.

Co-researcher code	Age	Qualifications	Years teaching experience	Service context			Number of TLDS rounds
				Current service type	Service community	Geographic region	
Anne LDC1	34	Diploma CS Bachelor of ECE	17 years (2 with BECE)	Sessional kindergarten in LDC	Parent committee of management	Southern region	2
Jane LDC2	34	Bachelor of EC studies	8 years	Sessional kindergarten in LDC	Parent committee of management	Southern region	4
Pink LDC3	34	Bachelor of EC studies	12 years	Sessional kindergarten in LDC	Parent committee of management	Northern inner city region	4
Barbara LDC4	31	Bachelor of ECE (with Honours)	11 years (2 with BECE)	Sessional kindergarten in LDC	Parent committee of management	Northern inner city region	1
Suzanne SAK1	42	Graduate Diploma of ECE	20 years	Sessional Kindergarten	Cluster management	Western region	2

Table 2.3: Summary of primary school co-researcher demographic data.

Co-researcher code	Age	Qualifications	Years teaching experience	Service context			Number of TLDS rounds
				Current service type	Service community	Geographic region	
Phoebe PPS1	61	Diploma of teaching primary + extra year = Bachelor	32 years	Primary school	Local government	Northern inner city region	4
Louise PPS2	33	Bachelor of nursing Bachelor of teaching	9 years	Early years in Primary school	Local government	Northern inner city region	4
Jacqui PPS3	34	Bachelor of Primary Education specialised in EC	3 years	Early years in Primary school	Local government	Northern inner city region	2
Rachel PPS4	50	Graduate Diploma of teaching	30years	Primary school	Catholic sector	Northern inner city region	4
Mary PPS5	29	Bachelor of Education	8 years	Early years in primary school	Local government	Northern inner city region	1

Finding my way as a researcher

Throughout the process of completing of my research, I repeatedly grappled with two central tensions. The first of these was my inability to recognise myself as a 'real' researcher. For much of the time, I felt like an imposter - someone pretending to know what they were doing (and not very well). I continuously second-guessed my choices and decisions and at any given point, I expected someone to expose me as the fraud that I felt I was. "Hang on a minute. Who *are* you? What are *you* doing *here*?"

The second of these tensions was the need for me to acknowledge and confront the personal biases I carry as an early childhood educator. While I felt I owned these biases from the beginning, it was only when I was transcribing the interviews and I heard myself using "us" and "we" and "I" when referring to early childhood educators that I could see how deeply embedded my loyalties were and how personally affronted I had once been by the "us and them" divide.

Funnily enough, exploring these tensions while engaged in my research has given me licence to understand and engage with others and myself from multiple perspectives. For me the notion of "us and them" has been irrevocably disrupted. There is no turning back. Does that make me a 'real' researcher now? I guess it all depends on who you ask.

Research validity

Establishing research rigour

An important aspect of determining the validity of any type of research is establishing its rigour (Liamputtong, 2009; Hughes, 2001; Yates, 2004; Cresswell, 2007). By definition, the premise of qualitative research is that "reality is socially constructed" (Liamputtong, 2009, p.20) and this means that the criteria used for measuring and assessing quantitative research data is not

applicable. Instead, Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Bryman, 2004) propose using the criteria of trustworthiness and authenticity. Trustworthiness consists of the following criteria; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Bryman, 2004).

Collectively, these measures of rigour aim to ascertain that the research conducted; authentically represents the co-researchers' perspectives (Liamputtong, 2009; Schwandt, 1997), demonstrates that the research process was "logical, traceable and documented" (Schwandt, 1997, p.164) and yields findings that can be applied to other groups through the identification of similarities (Liamputtong, 2009; Schwandt, 1997). In relation to my research this entailed emailing each co-researchers their interview transcript and giving them the opportunity to edit or delete any of the data recorded and establishing an audit trail of detailed records of all stages of the research. Moreover, given that my research is exploratory, the sample size of ten co-researchers allows for the identification of initial insights and emerging themes. As there is limited research in this area, my findings could then be used to elicit further research.

Reflexivity

As my research draws on a post-structural methodological framework, it is also important to consider reflexivity as a tool for validation of qualitative research (Liamputtong, 2009). This acknowledges that the researcher is not detached from the research and subsequently critical self-reflection is required. This allows the researcher to take into consideration their own biases and assumptions and how these could impact on the interpretation and representation of data (Schwandt, 1997; Cresswell, 2007). This is relevant, as my personal experience as an early childhood educator who has completed the TLDS underpins my own understanding and opinion on the use of the TLDS.

Limitations

The main limitations of this research are inherent in the scale of the study. The relatively small sample size means that not all of the stakeholders who have a vested interest in transition practices are represented within this research. This is reflective of both the time constraints of completing an entire research cycle part-time across three years and the writing of a minor thesis within a 20,000 word limit. While this means that only the voices of selected stakeholders have been considered this research has highlighted that there is limited, available research literature that makes specific reference to the TLDS. In doing this, it may become the impetus for continued research that can incorporate the voices of all stakeholders who have a vested interest in transition.

Data analysis

Transcribing each co-researcher interview was the first step in the data analysis process. As my research places a strong emphasis on how language is used by the co-researchers, it was essential for me to transcribe direct speech, non-verbal communication, tone and emphasis of voice and any pauses (King & Horrocks, 2010). While time consuming and at times infuriating, this process was invaluable as it immersed me in the data and allowed me to familiarise myself with its breadth and depth (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In doing this, I was more easily able to identify common themes or patterns and then categorise and code these accordingly (Liamputtong, 2009; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2006). For me, this process was multi-layered and involved coding, categorising and tabulating the data for each question. This data was supplemented with individual written summaries that were also tabulated. Finally, the tables were layered over each other to create a single table that allowed the data findings to be compared.

These data findings were then analysed with regards to co-researcher language and content (King & Horrocks, 2010). These refer respectively to the exploration of how language is used to interpret and explain co-researchers' understandings

and the attempt to understand each co-researcher's "lived experience from their own position" (King & Horrocks, 2010, p.142). The focus on individualised, lived experiences and the significance of language lends itself to the idea of multiple understandings and perspectives. Accordingly, the chosen method of analysis needed to recognise and reflect multiplicity, and for this reason, a post-structural conceptual framework was used. This is outlined in further detail in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3

Conceptual framework

This chapter will provide the rationale for drawing on post-structural theories as my conceptual framework and the implications of this for informing how my research was conducted (Blaise, 2001; Gough, 2002; Dowling & Brown, 2010). In doing this, the chapter will compare and contrast Modern and Post-modern paradigms (Hughes, 2001; Liamputtong, 2009) and provide a preliminary discussion on the intersection of knowledge, power and truth (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983; Faubion, 1994; Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001; MacNaughton, 2005; Cohen, 2008) and Foucauldian concepts of discourse and power (MacNaughton, 2003; Cannella, 2005; Ball, 2006; Burman 2008). Collectively, this will highlight the significance of reading the data through a kaleidoscopic lens that recognises the shifting and dynamic nature of drawing on multiple understandings and perspectives.

Preferential paradigms and methodological perspectives

Modernism and seeking the ‘truth’

Hughes (2001) refers to a paradigm as “a way to see the world and organise it into a coherent whole” (p.35). Consequently, a paradigm can reflect different ways of comprehending how knowledge is understood, produced and interpreted (Hughes, 2001). From a research perspective, certain paradigms are predisposed to particular methodological approaches. In the case of Modern or structuralist paradigms, they are historically equated with positivist perspectives and quantitative approaches (Hughes, 2001; Kamberelis & Dimitriades, 2005; Liamputtong, 2009).

Accordingly, adherents to this paradigm view knowledge as scientifically grounded and driven, thus consisting of fixed universal truths. Within Modern paradigms, these universal truths are knowable, predictable, measurable and

testable (Hughes, 2001; Kamberelis & Dimitriades, 2005). Furthermore, research can be conducted in tightly controlled contexts that are easily replicated and standardised, allowing for the possibility of producing generalised findings based on “representative samples” (Liamputtong, 2009, p.5).

Modern paradigms are historically linked to and constructed with distinct and diverse understandings about knowledge, and about how children learn and develop. According to Cannella (1997) “unconscious cultural values create the belief in child development, privilege particular ways of knowing, and actually limit possibilities for younger members of society.” (p.46.). The subsequent exploration of the underpinning theories within early childhood education serves to demonstrate that developmental, behavioural, cognitive and socio-cultural paradigms have come to dominate current understandings and interpretations of children’s learning and development.

Post-modernism and chaotic multiplicities

By contrast, Post-modern paradigms are commonly aligned with qualitative approaches that focus on the lived experiences of individuals (Hughes, 2001; Kamberelis & Dimitriades, 2005; Liamputtong, 2009). “Postmodernism challenges traditional premises and attempts to deconstruct them” (Liamputtong, 2009, p.10.). Consequently, they aim to trouble the Modernist belief that knowledge and understanding of the world is representative of a universal, sequential, age-stage driven process (Hughes, 2001; MacNaughton, 2003) Instead Post-modernists advocate that there are multiple perspectives through which to see and understand the world.

Accordingly, Post-modern paradigms embrace the possibility of many truths and recognise the crucial role of cultural, social, economical, historical and political contexts. However, what distinguishes post-structural paradigms is their assertion that power, knowledge and truth are inextricably linked (Hughes, 2001) and, as such, have the potential to determine which truth becomes privileged at the expense of other ‘lesser’ truths. In many cases “the theories that

gain the position of *'the'* truth often serve the interests of the powerful and elite groups within a particular society at a particular point in time" (MacNaughton, 2003, p.75).

Evidently different paradigms position children and their understanding and interpretation of knowledge and learning in different ways. While modern paradigms understand the child in one single, 'true' way, post-structural paradigms highlight the complexity of how children can be understood depending on the discourse within which, they and those around them are operating. This is relevant to my research as it questions how children understand themselves and how others understand them through the implementation of the TLDS. Drawing on the kaleidoscope as a metaphor, a post-structural lens caters for the continual shifting of "a pattern of things or events which is complex and constantly changing" (*Macquarie Encyclopedic Dictionary*, 2012, p.671). This allows for the possibility of knowing the child in multiple ways and this will inform the effectiveness of the TLDS as a transition practice. It also insists on the re-imagining of children and childhood as a catalyst for a reconceptualised approach to how knowledge and learning is produced, understood and interpreted (MacNaughton, 2003).

Determining dominant discourses

The intersection of power, knowledge and truth

Inherent to the critical examination of power/knowledge/truth relations and how they inform and impact on practice, is the exploration of discourses and how and why they are taken up and enacted. According to MacNaughton (2003) "A discourse groups together ideas, feelings, words, images, practices, actions and looks around particular areas or domains of our social life and they provide a framework for us to make sense of and act in our social world" (p.81). This definition highlights the significance of subjectivity within post-structural theories and how subjectivity is related to and can be expressed through discourse. Furthermore, Post-structuralist thinkers "regard the individual as

unstable.....instability derives from their status as both a 'product' and a 'producer' of languages..."(Hughes, 2001, p.51). Accordingly, the meaning of language can also never be stable or fixed. If then, subjectivity is about how we as individuals ascribe meaning to ourselves and our world, and discourse is how we understand and enact this meaning, and meaning is constantly shifting, then there are multiple discourses available to us, depending on the subjectivity we are experiencing at any given time (Mills, 1997; MacNaughton, 2005).

Post-structuralists argue that the power/knowledge/truth relations that operate within a discourse most often determines the discourse chosen and enacted. In other words, there are discourses that are seen as holding greater power. As a consequence, these discourses are seen as more acceptable, appropriate and normal. This means they are more likely to be more available, chosen and perpetuated as the dominant discourse. Subsequently, those who challenge or resist dominant discourses are often seen as unusual, atypical or abnormal often resulting in marginalisation, discrimination or oppression. For this reason, post-structuralists seek to identify and analyse dominant discourses to ascertain power/knowledge/truth relations with the intent of disrupting these to enable more equitable and socially just practices (MacNaughton, 2003; MacNaughton, 2005).

A genealogy of the dominant discourse of the child

According to Cannella (2005), three of the most significant dominant discourses operating within the early childhood profession are those associated with "child development, scientific knowledge, redemption themes... " (p.18). These dominant discourses have been and continue to be, strongly influenced by historically, socially and culturally constructed images of children and corresponding notions of childhood (Silin, 1995; Cannella, 1997; Cannella, 2005; Lowe, 2010;).

It wasn't until Early Modern times, around the 16th century, that children began to be seen as different to adults. Prior to this, childhood was not recognised as a

separate, discrete stage and children were seen simply as smaller sized adults (Johnson, Christie & Wardle, 2004; Riley, 2007). Moving into the 17th and 18th century, competing notions of children and childhood reflected the struggle between Christian values and beliefs, and those embodied by the 'Age of Enlightenment' that espoused that "knowledge (truth) would be discovered through reason" (Cannella, 1997, p.21.). These opposing discourses positioned children retrospectively, as being innately evil or innocent and located them at opposite ends of a spectrum.

This dichotomous perception of children and childhood gained increasing momentum with succession into Modern times. During both World War 1 and 2, children were seen either as active contributors to the labour market or in need of being cared for while mothers were called into the workforce to fill the gaps left by men who had gone off to fight. However, post-war times signalled the return of the male workforce and as a result, women and children found themselves excluded from the labour market. This left them uncertain about their roles within an increasingly industrialised society (Cannella, 1997; Johnson et. al. 2004; Riley, 2007; Burman, 2008).

Symptomatic of this increasingly industrialised society were the subsequent growth of urbanisation and the expanding of poverty across populations. This appeared to be the catalyst for increasing criminal and degenerate behaviour (Burman, 2008) and ill health caused by a low standard of living. Children seemed to be more significantly affected by these conditions, and society's efforts to address their plight saw the emergence of philanthropy and formal, organised education (Silin 1995; Riley, 2007; Burman, 2008). Arguably, the location of children within such settings enabled their behaviour and learning to be observed and monitored and, subsequently, controlled and regulated (Cannella, 1997).

Juxtaposed against the backdrop of industrialisation, was the establishment of a Modernist discourse, "Consistent with enlightenment views of progress, modern thought asserts that human beings are moving toward increasingly more

advanced civilizations” (Cannella, 2007, p.24). This was augmented by an intensified focus on the use of scientific inquiry. This reflected the authority of employing a positivist paradigm that aimed to make predictions in order to identify cause and affect relationships, thereby establishing absolute truths that could be applied universally. In light of this, psychology gained increasing attention and status as an underpinning theory of child development (Cannella, 1997, Burman, 2008; Silin 2005; MacNaughton, 2005).

Naming the dominant discourses in early childhood

In contemporary times, the dominant discourse of the child as innocent and the child as developing prevail and this is exacerbated and perpetuated by the underpinnings of developmental psychology (Cannella, 1997, Silin, 2005; Burman, 2008). These dominant discourses also inform the positioning of adults as “...the discourse of child needs implies that certain human beings can actually identify the needs of others, creating an authoritative knowledge that is controlled by a particular group and is imposed on another” (Cannella, 1997, p.35.). This is problematic as it warrants surveillance and observation of children to determine what their needs are so they can be met. Most commonly this situates parents and teachers as those who can identify and address these needs. This infers that it is the adult’s role to provide knowledge, protection and guidance in order to assist the child to reach the desired end-point. Accordingly, parents and educators operate respectively within the dominant discourses of good parent/apprentice and educator as expert.

Taking these understandings of dominant discourse into consideration, my research aims to identify and challenge how these discourses are in circulation, broadly within the early childhood profession and more specifically within the TLDS. To understand this, an examination of how the structure, design and requirements of the TLDS correspond with the dominant discourses of the child, families and educators is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

The seductive siren call of Michel Foucault

When I first started to explore post-structural ideas, particularly those around discourse and power within an early childhood context, Foucault was still very much the name on everyone's lips. The fact that many of my colleagues seemed familiar with his work, outweighed how overwhelmed I felt by all that I didn't know or understand. However, I soon came to learn that a sense of chaos and not knowing, to varying degrees, would become a frustrating yet inescapable state of being. Accepting this was much harder and so began my love-hate relationship with Foucauldian explorations of power.

Pre-data preconceptions of power

Inherent to understanding how dominant discourses operate, is the notion of power and how it is related to the production of knowledge and truth. When I first started to engage with the concept of power, my interpretation of this statement drew primarily on Foucault's thinking around sovereign power (Cohen, 2008). Foucault described sovereign power "as a form of power expressed in recognizable, visible ways through particular and identifiable individuals" (Foucault 1980, cited in Cohen, 2008, p.16). This suggests that sovereign power involves a power relation between two or more people or groups of people. Within this power relation, the power is acknowledged and either an individual or a group knowingly exercises power over another individual or group.

This resonated with my belief that as an early childhood educator, I was at the mercy of some higher authority that was brandishing power over me. In this instance, sovereign power was located within the Australian National and State governments and exercised in two ways. Firstly, through the introduction of the EYLF and the VEYLDF that now regulated how early childhood educators could understand and measure their knowledge of the child through the shared Learning Outcomes of the frameworks. And secondly, through the regulation of how early childhood educators could engage with transition and the mandating

of the TLDS. This understanding of power was driven by my personal anger at what I saw as the blatantly unequal distribution of power and my subsequent feelings of professional and personal powerlessness. It was these feelings that compelled me to turn to Foucault, in search of answers that would allow me to reconnect with feelings of empowerment.

Post-data perceptions of power

When I returned to my conceptual framework post-data collection and analysis, my naïve and innocent understanding (or rather lack of understanding), of the complexity of power bemused me. My writing was vague and clumsy and it was obvious that I hadn't quite grasped how power circulated through and within dominant discourses. It was clear that I recognised power as important, but my explanation of why was narrow and reflective of my personal preconceptions. It was then that I realised that I had needed to live it in order to comprehend it. I could only really understand the multiplicity of how power relations operated when I could see it through the data. As I neared the end of my thesis, it was the desire to read and interpret the data in different ways, and becoming more engaged with Foucault, that allowed my appreciation of the intricacies of power to evolve and unfold. This shift in my thinking about, and understanding of, power will be further explored at the end of Chapter 4 and specifically throughout Chapter 5.

Chapter 4

Transition Learning and Development Statements; (mis)understandings and practices.

This chapter will explore how my research data can be used to illuminate multiple understandings of my research question, “How do early childhood and primary school educators understand and use the TLDS?” To do this, I will draw on the four key findings to emerge from the data. The first finding is that early childhood and primary school co-researchers understand and use the TLDS through the *same* dominant discourses. The second finding acknowledges the capacity of the TLDS to act as a catalyst for building reciprocal and respectful relationships between early childhood and primary school co-researchers. The third finding highlights that the way language is understood, used, and interpreted is embedded in discourse. And the final finding identifies that there are four dominant discourses circulating within the TLDS. In order to elaborate on these key findings, the following discussion will be framed around my four minor questions.

How does the TLDS address key issues identified by the different stakeholders?

The inclusion of this question as a part of my research was premised on the key findings identified in my literature review. These indicated that transition is a complex process that is influenced by the multiple perspectives of the various stakeholders involved (Fabian 2000; Neuman, 2002; Einarsdottir et al., 2008) and that for each stakeholder there are different perceptions and understandings about what constitutes a smooth transition (McIntyre, Eckert, Fiese, DiGennaro Reed and Wildenger, 2010.; Peters, 2000; Griebel & Niesel, 2009). The literature review also revealed that there that were three elements that seemed to have significance for all of the stakeholders: continuity between settings, identity and relationships and collaborative communication (Kagan, 1991; Neuman, 2002; Dunlop, 2003; Dunlop & Fabian, 2007, Griebel & Niesel 2009; Barblett, Barratt-Pugh, Kilgallon & Maloney, 2011). The research further emphasised that it was

important that communication be meaningful, ongoing and involve the exchange of relevant information (Fabian 2000; La Paro, Pianta & Cox, 2000; Margetts, 2002; Dockett & Perry, 2004a; Dunlop & Fabian, 2007; Giallo, Treyvaud, Matthews & Kienhuis, 2010).

This is when I hit the first snag in the analysis of my data. I couldn't figure out how to write about the data in connection with this question because my data didn't correspond with or reflect any of the key issues identified in the literature review. Instead, my data revealed firstly, that early childhood and primary school co-researchers understood the TLDS in the same way and that this was informed by their operation within shared dominant discourses. Secondly, the data highlighted that early childhood and primary school co-researchers valued skills and knowledge differently and this influenced how they determined children's readiness for school.

Understanding the TLDS

When investigating the ways in which early childhood and primary school educators understand the TLDS, the data revealed that all of the co-researchers recognised the TLDS as a tool for sharing information about individual children. Furthermore, all co-researchers agreed that the information shared drew on multiple perspectives of the child.

“The purpose of the transition statement is to give the school information about the child. Information from the family about the child's family background and the child's voice. Feelings about going to school and the family's feelings about the child going to school” (Jane, LDC2, p14, L: 453-458).

“I think it's to give us a good idea of the child as a whole child. You know from lots of different perspectives” (Mary, PPS5, p26, L: 842-845).

The data also revealed that there were dominant discourses in circulation throughout the TLDS. I had been reading authors such as Cannella (1997), MacNaughton (2005), Ball (2006) and Burman (2008), to inform my literature review and conceptual framework and so, the presence of dominant discourses was not unexpected. However, what was surprising was the emergence of shared key themes around the dominant discourses for children, families and educators. To make sense of why this might be the case, I decided that further exploration of how these discourses were in operation was warranted and this is discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

Requisite skills and knowledge and readiness for school

Given that all co-researchers had acknowledged that sharing information between early childhood and primary school educators was the principal purpose of the TLDS, it was critical to consider what kind of information was being shared, why and whether it was meaningful and relevant. And so, the first tension in the data was revealed. All the co-researchers agreed that the information shared should identify each child's strengths, interests and areas for improvement.

“..it provides information for the school, children with behavioural problems...what areas they have strengths in or weaknesses. Some things that they might need to work on a bit more” (Anne, LDC1, p24, L: 767-781).

“This is really going to help us with what children...the skills and the learning they have. It's going to help us flag children. Identify children that we need to get in first by flagging. Even flagging parental concerns” (Rachel, PPS4, p27, L: 863-872).

That said, a clear distinction between skills and knowledge and how each of these was valued and used to inform the type of information that was shared became apparent from the data. Early childhood co-researchers placed a heavy

significance on social and emotional competence, and the indicators most commonly used to measure readiness were classified as either self-regulatory or self-help skills.

“I think the main thing for school readiness is being socially competent. Being able to deal with changes. It’s also self-regulation as well. Like emotionally ready, being able to separate from their families” (Anne, LDC1, p4, L: 109-126).

Common examples of self-regulatory skills included children being able to sit and listen, take turns, engage with a variety of learning experiences and interact confidently and respectfully with peers. By contrast, self-help skills most often included children being able to take responsibility for their own belongings, look after themselves and follow directions.

“I think it’s a lot about the self-help skills. I think they’re really important. Being able to be responsible for their own belongings. Being able to take themselves to the toilet” (Jane, LDC2, p6, L: 191-196).

With regards to emotional competence the indicators that were most commonly used to measure readiness were confidence, maturity and resilience. All of the early childhood co-researchers believed that the willingness to try new experiences and the ability to express a positive sense of themselves as learners reflected a child’s level of emotional confidence and maturity. Likewise, they all believed that positive self-esteem and self-awareness enabled children to cope with and manage change and this was a commonly agreed upon indicator of resilience.

“For me it’s about confidence. And coming back to the framework, it’s about the being, belonging and becoming. If you’re confident and you have a high self-esteem you will go to school and you will learn” (Suzanne, SAK1, p6, L: 193-194; p8, L: 246-249).

When it came to academic competency this was associated with literacy and numeracy knowledge such as being able to write your name, identify letters of the alphabet or count to ten. While three early childhood co-researchers believed that it was important to include numeracy and literacy in their programs they didn't feel that this knowledge should be explicitly taught. Instead, they saw their role as exposing children to literacy and numeracy through the provision of appropriate materials or resources. It was then up to the children to initiate and drive their own learning.

“Early literacy and numeracy. That's a bonus, if they can recognise numbers and letters. And write their name or write words. That's something we do foster if it does come up” (Pink, LDC3, p3, L: 93-95).

“It's not making them sit down and do work. But just giving those simple experiences to them so they're exposed to it. And I just find that they do it for themselves” (Anne, LDC1, p22, L: 689-692).

On the other hand, while primary school co-researchers appeared to find it easier to identify and name knowledge they had little or no expectation that children would come to school with any knowledge.

“I actually don't expect them to know anything” (Louise, PPS2: p17, L: 533).

“I think academically children can come at any stage because that's my job” (Jacqui, PPS3, p9, L: 278-282).

The term knowledge was associated with academic readiness in terms of literacy and numeracy and all of the primary school researchers were adamant that the greater focus should be placed on social and emotional readiness.

“And sometimes people think that school readiness is an academic thing. I personally think it’s more an emotional thing” (Phoebe, PPS1, p7, L: 209-211).

Some of the key indicators named for measuring readiness included being able to separate from parents/caregivers, coping with school life, demonstrating emotional resilience and managing self-regulatory skills such as independent toileting.

“I guess socially and emotionally is more what I’m concerned about. Are they independent in toileting? How are they going in terms of separating from mum and dad at the start of the day?” (Mary, PPS5, p3, L: 86-93).

Interestingly, despite the initial insistence of all of the primary school co-researchers that school readiness did not equate to academic readiness, all of them named numeracy and literacy skills as desirable. Examples of these included knowledge of the alphabet and what letters mean, being able to write their name, being able to recognise and recite the numbers to twenty and being able to recognise patterns of numbers and shapes. In fact, it was the absence of this academic knowledge that rendered the information provided by the TLDS less valuable or relevant for them from an educational perspective.

“I think it just helps you to get a good picture of the child. It’s not like I would use this and be using it for any assessment or anything like that. I probably don’t think it would help me in terms of, oh he looks like he’s high ability. Middle. Low. Because it’s not really about, obviously their academic capabilities” (Mary, PPS5, p34, L: 1106-1108; p35, L: 1119-1124).

What are the benefits and challenges of using the TLDS for early childhood and primary school educators?

An essential element for determining whether the TLDS is making transition smoother and creating shared, professional relationships is investigating what the perceived challenges and benefits are for early childhood and primary school educators. The data revealed that there was one major benefit and three central challenges for early childhood co-researchers when using the TLDS. For primary school co-researchers, there was no substantial benefit and three noted challenges. This indicates that the early childhood and primary school co-researchers understand the purpose of the TLDS in the same way, but how they use the TLDS, is not the same. However, early childhood and primary school co-researchers did identify one shared benefit, four shared challenges and a shared outcome that they recognised as both a challenge and a benefit (refer to Table 4.1). While Table 4.1 outlines all of the challenges and benefits, the data revealed that some were more significant than others and these will be examined in greater detail in the following discussion.

Table 4.1: Summary of benefits and challenges of using the TLDS identified by early childhood and primary school co-researchers.

	Early childhood co-researchers	Primary school co-researchers	Both
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> professional pride in being able to showcase their expertise 	Not applicable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sharing information about the child
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lack of feedback knowing who is responsible for initiating follow up communication continued use of additional transition documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the TLDS doesn't arrive in time to inform transition programs not receiving a TLDS for every child disparate frameworks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> language used in the TLDS parental consent time TLDS as a single practice
Benefit and challenge	Not applicable		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a catalyst for building reciprocal and respectful relationships

An early childhood perspective...

For all of the early childhood co-researchers, three main challenges to engaging with the TLDS transpired. The first was the lack of feedback provided on the TLDSs. The second was the question of whose responsibility it was to initiate communication and follow up. And finally, the continued use of alternative transition documents by primary school educators was also seen as problematic.

“...all you can do is hope that on the other end, that those things are read and considered and taken into account and actually acted upon. But we have no control over that. And I think that that still is the challenging thing. That lack of knowing what happens after you know...” (Barbara, LDC4, p46, L: 1500-1506).

“You know the one thing I want is for the school to know what I’m doing. Or for the school to follow through or you know, keep going. But nothing happened. I rang the school heaps of times. No-one ever called back” (Anne, LDC1, pp63-64, L: 2058-2065).

“And quite a lot of schools are also sending other forms as well as their transition statement. So other forms to collect information about the child. So I wonder how much they’re being used?” (Jane, LDC2, p43, L: 1393-1398).

Of these concerns, the first and foremost, for all of the early childhood co-researchers, was knowing whether the TLDS had been received and read. If so, was the information provided relevant and useful and how was it being used? Alongside this, all of the early childhood co-researchers expressed a shared frustration at the lack of feedback or follow up from the primary school educators, unless particular children or issues had been flagged.

“My biggest gripe is that fact that I don’t know if they’ve found it useful. And I don’t know if...they are only reflecting or looking through them when something comes up” (Pink, LDC3, p55, L: 1764-1768).

This frustration was only exacerbated by the question of whose responsibility it was to initiate communication and follow up when feedback was required. In particular, two of the early childhood co-researchers questioned why primary school educators didn’t initiate communication even when they had ticked the box that indicated they that they would like “the opportunity to discuss this information further with the Prep Teacher” (DEECD, 2009b, p.7)

In contrast to this, primary school co-researchers were less concerned with the question of *who* would initiate communication. In fact, four of the primary school co-researchers openly acknowledged that they didn’t feel it necessary to initiate communication with early childhood educators unless they had specific concerns about individual children.

“I have only once or twice rung up and spoken to the early childhood person about an individual in my class” (Phoebe, PPS1, p44, L: 1406-1407).

Instead, primary school co-researchers were more concerned with *how* they would know that communication needed to be initiated? This was further evidenced in the data, with three of the primary school co-researchers explicitly commenting on the tick the box option provided within the TLDS. They felt that this was a valuable and essential tool for highlighting when additional communication was required.

“...and I know that as soon as I see the ticked box that I need to call” (Jacqui, PPS3, p32, L: 1038-1039).

“And if it’s got a ticked box you can call the kinder or, oh gosh, I really need to watch this person in the playground” (Louise, PPS2, p50, L: 1624-1626).

However, basing the need for communication solely on the tick the box option implicitly placed the onus on early childhood educators to initiate communication. This failed to provide early childhood educators with the feedback they identify as critical to knowing whether the TLDS is a meaningful and relevant document. Interestingly, two of the primary school co-researchers reflected on this lack of feedback to early childhood educators, acknowledging it as problematic in fostering positive professional relationships.

“Kinder teachers are really good at giving information to the primary school teachers. But the primary school teachers are not good at giving feedback on that information or giving anything back. So hmmm... something to think about” (Jacqui, PPS3, p47, L: 1506-1510).

In addition to the tensions related to feedback and the responsibility for initiating communication, four of the early childhood co-researchers noted that primary schools continued to have their own individual transition practices and templates they wanted completed, in addition to the TLDS.

“Because some schools still have their own transition forms and processes that they still value over the transition statements. So I don’t know if they use those in conjunction or if they dismiss what’s in those?” (Barbara, LDC4, p49, L: 1580-1588).

All of the early childhood co-researchers interpreted these challenges as a lack of acknowledgement of their professional expertise and the time and effort they had invested in writing the TLDSs. This only served to undermine the professional pride that all of the early childhood co-researchers had commented on experiencing at being able to share what they knew about each child with primary school educators.

“I felt like it was a quality thing that I felt proud of and that it stood up to whoever was going to read it. You know, that it was something worthwhile writing” (Barbara, LDC4, p30, L: 977-981).

This left the early childhood co-researchers feeling that their knowledge of the child was often perceived as redundant and that they were being asked to defer to what the primary school educators saw as most important and relevant.

“They were telling us that we need to be teaching children how to put shoes on. How we need to be teaching children how to write their names. And in lower case not upper case. How to hold scissors. And I was just like whoa. Whoa. You know, how about we have a conversation about how you understand the child?” (Pink, LDC3, p58, L: 1860-1865).

And from the primary school co-researchers...

Although Table 4.1 indicates that the primary school co-researchers failed to identify any explicit benefits of using the TLDS, it is notable that all of the primary school co-researchers raised concerns around not receiving the TLDS for every child. This reflected the common belief that it was better to have some information rather than none.

“I’ve got one child in here that I didn’t get the transition statement for. I would’ve loved to have seen how they’d been at kinder” (Mary, PPS5, p55, L: 1733-1736).

A more pertinent finding though, is that while all of the schools had comprehensive transition programs, all of the primary school co-researchers emphasised the fact that because the TLDSs didn’t arrive in time, they couldn’t be used to inform the transition program. Furthermore, for three out of the five primary school co-researchers this meant that the TLDS wasn’t used in conjunction with transition programs at all.

“No. Only because by the time we get them. Generally they start coming through, say at the end of term four. Or the beginning of the year we might still be getting a few through” (Jacqui, PPS3, pp41-42, L: 1337-1341).

If the TLDS is not used to inform transition programs, *how* can it be making transition to school smoother for children?

Educator tensions and contradictions

There was an underlying friction between the early childhood and primary school educators that went unnoticed until the challenges of engaging with the TLDS were considered. This tension evidenced in the data was not surprising, given that the literature review had clearly identified the existence of an historic, ongoing disparity between educators from the early childhood and primary school sectors. According to Peters (2000), one explanation for this disparity is the difference “between the early childhood pedagogy of challenging, provoking and supporting learning through scaffolding and creating settings for child-initiated experiences, and the traditional primary school teachers’ role of imparting information or instructing children in large groups” (p.4).

This corresponded with data evidence that drew attention to a range of differences in the ways that early childhood and primary school co-researchers valued and engaged with the TLDS as a tool for providing smooth, positive and meaningful transition experiences for children. These included: different understandings of the skills and knowledge required for transitioning successfully to school, the use and interpretation of language used to share information about each child, incompatible frameworks and ambiguity about the role of early childhood and primary school educators throughout transition practices.

But wait...

Despite the aforementioned tensions and contradictions associated with understanding and engaging with the TLDS, both early childhood and primary school co-researchers named relationship building as the foremost challenge *and* benefit. All of the early childhood co-researchers acknowledged that prior to the TLDS there had either been no relationship, or limited contact at best, between early childhood and primary school educators. Similarly, all except one of the primary school co-researchers believed that the greatest benefit of the TLDS was its capacity to act as a catalyst for building professional relationships. Subsequently, four early childhood and three primary school co-researchers agreed that meaningful and ongoing communication between early childhood and primary school educators was happening as a result of the introduction of the TLDS.

“I don’t necessarily think it was just through doing the transition statements. But because they’ve been introduced, now we’re aware that I think we have to have more of a relationship with the school” (Jane, LDC2, p36, L: 1145-1148).

“...before the transition statements you might have got the kinder, but you wouldn’t get the kinder teacher’s name. Whereas now I see _____ kinder, teacher _____. So I get to see who the kinder teachers are” (Louise, PPS2, p55, L: 1795-1819).

These co-researchers acknowledged that the TLDS had allowed them to recognise the value of investing in shared professional relationships. However, despite this shared benefit, all of the early childhood co-researchers and three of the primary school co-researchers identified time limitations and constraints as the fundamental challenge to relationship building. Accordingly, both early childhood and primary school co-researchers believed that more time dedicated to ongoing professional networking and shared professional development was required to support and nurture professional relationships. In support of this,

two early childhood and two primary school co-researchers shared their positive experiences of participating in transition network meetings as a way for professionals to get to know each other and have meaningful conversations.

“It’s having time to talk to each other. And that’s why I think the networking things have just started. The network meetings that are facilitated by a kinder teacher and primary school teacher where we can all get around and talk about things like the statements or our programs” (Louise, PPS2, p60, L: 1956-1664).

“Then at the end of last year we actually had, this was fantastic, they had booths set up so all the kinder teachers sat in their own booths and all the school teachers would come around with templates of all the kids that were going to their school and they just wanted to know what they were like. Personality, who their friends were, how do you think they’ll settle in?” (Anne, LDC1, p9, L: 275-279).

Clearly from this data, it can be seen that drawing on a range of diverse ways to share information about children moving from early childhood to primary school contexts informed the development of reciprocal professional relationships. This correlates with findings from the literature review that identifies that the focus on a single practice as the most important is problematic as there is no evidence to support that any one transition practice is the most effective way to facilitate smooth transition (Early et al., 2001; Margetts, 2002).

How does language support and disengage early childhood and primary school educators' engagement with the TLDS?

According to DEECD (2009a), "The Victorian framework describes each of these Outcomes for children birth to eight years, linking the learning outcomes from the EYLF to the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) Levels 1 and 2. The Outcomes provide a shared language for all early childhood professionals and families to use when planning for children's learning and development" (DEECD, 2009a, p.6.). This shared language was posited as one of the key tools for meeting the intention of the TLDS to create respectful, on-going professional relationships between early childhood and primary school educators. In exploring this through the above question, the data revealed that early childhood and primary school co-researchers shared two foremost concerns; understanding and interpreting the language used within the TLDS and the focus on strength-based language.

Language as meaning making

Knowing whether the language being used to share knowledge about each child was understood and interpreted in the way that it was intended was the second tension to transpire from the data. Being able to understand the language and the tone used within the TLDS was identified as a fundamental challenge by all of the primary school co-researchers and this appeared to be linked to the use of strength-based language to write about the child.

"In the sense that the people who get them are not on the same page.
Are not using the same terminology and the same understandings"
(Phoebe, PPS1, p48, L: 1537-1539).

The written format of the TLDS also presented a challenge for all of the early childhood and primary school co-researchers. The early childhood co-researchers acknowledged that there was an inclination to cut and paste information and this meant that many TLDSs were generic statements that didn't

necessarily provide relevant or meaningful information. This resonated with the sentiments of three of the primary school co-researchers. They felt that the information provided was often “pretty transitory” (Phoebe, PPS1, p46, 1498), provided a limited snapshot of each child and tended to be repetitive or generic.

“And you know, by the time you’ve read the eighth one you think, which child am I reading about now? Cos it’s, you go back and you think, wait a minute, and honestly it’s a cut and paste” (Rachel, PPS4, p44, L: 1435-1438).

Another issue raised by three of the primary school co-researchers, was the tendency of the language used in the TLDS to be inconsistent in terms of style, content and relevance depending on who had written them.

“Some kinder teachers write more than I maybe think they needed to write about that person because they wanna cover all bases. Some write less and some write things that are practical and others write things in a very pedagogical way” (Louise, PPS2, p51, L: 1643-1652).

One early childhood co-researcher did recognise the potential of this to bring into question the professional expertise and identity of early childhood educators. Likewise, one primary school co-researcher noted that it was hard to see early childhood educators as professionals if the quality of the composition of the TLDS was questionable.

“And teachers get really cross when they see cut and paste, spelling mistakes, you know all those superficial things” (Rachel, PPS4, p55, L: 1776-1778).

Writing in 'code' - strength based language

All of the primary school co-researchers felt that strength-based language often veiled what the early childhood educator was actually trying to say. Consequently, primary school co-researchers felt that they received contradictory information about the child. This was a source of frustration for all of the primary school co-researchers, and three in particular, explicitly mentioned needing to “read between the lines”, break the code or decipher what was being said.

“It just seems like it’s all been sugar coated. And it’s a bit like when you’re trying to write a report about you know. He’s a very enthusiastic child and you think, well I’m not really trying to say that but that’s what you know, that’s the positive spin” (Mary, PPS5, pp52-53, L: 1703-1711).

This recognition echoed the sentiments of four of the early childhood co-researchers who agreed that strength-based language was an obstacle to sharing relevant and meaningful knowledge about individual children. These early childhood co-researchers were transparent in their recognition of the ambiguity of strength-based language and the need for it to be deciphered by primary school educators.

“But I spoke the language (air quotes) in the document. Child A would benefit from extra one on one time with the teacher at drop off time. Child A really enjoys spending time with the educators and showing and talking about special toys from home. So that’s indirectly saying I don’t have a big group of friends. I’m not very confident in engaging with others. I need to be around an adult. So security issues. Child A seems to prefer moving from one learning experience to the other. Those type of things” (Pink, LDC3, p38, L: 1227-1253).

Clearly these findings highlight the contradiction of using strength-based language to share knowledge alongside a deficit-based model to identify and measure children's knowledge. It was this contradiction that became the impetus for thinking about language in a different way. I had initially posed my question in relation to language in terms of the superficial, every day meaning of words. However, I was beginning to realise that language was much more than this. I was beginning to see how language was embedded in discourse and consequently, how it could be interpreted through power. Considering language in this way meant entertaining the possibility that language could be used to share privileged knowledge. This would in turn, inform how meaning is produced, assigned and circulated in ways that position this privileged knowledge as the sanctioned truth (MacNaughton, 2005).

Within early childhood, and across education more generally, the sanctioned truth about how children learn and develop is deeply embedded within developmental frameworks. Historically, the developmental norms and milestones that underpin developmental frameworks have provided a language that educators can use to document how they 'know' the child. This language includes words such as progress, advancement, stage, continuum and outcomes. Language that suggests that in knowing the child, educators can then predict where children should be at any given point in time with regards to their skills, abilities and knowledge. The ability to predict this also allows educators to measure children's skills, abilities and knowledge thus positioning them as experts and giving them licence to make decisions about children's readiness for school (Cannella, 2005; MacNaughton 2005; Burman, 2008; Penn, 2008).

What are the dominant discourses that circulate through the TLDS?

The nature of the data findings thus far, coupled with my ongoing engagement with post-structural readings, continued to compel me towards a deeper exploration of the discourses in operation. I needed to know more about dominant discourses and how and why they circulated throughout the TLDS.

Inherent to understanding how dominant discourses operate is the notion of power and how it is related to the production of knowledge and truth (MacNaughton, 2003).

Like other post-structural thinkers, Foucault rejected the notion that there are single, universal truths. He argued that certain truths are privileged as a consequence of social, historical and political constructs that reflect a dominant ideology. The knowledge that informs and perpetuates these truths is then privileged and those who have access to knowledge that is accepted as *the* truth, hold the power. This power allows certain truths to become legitimised and subsequently they can be used to manipulate and control an individual's actions, thoughts and feelings (Faubion, 1994; Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001; MacNaughton, 2005).

Accordingly, Foucault proposed that “power is a relationship struggle over how we use truths to build discourses about normality to produce and regulate ourselves (e.g. our bodies, desires and texts), our relationships, our institutions, especially our production of normality” (MacNaughton, 2005, p.27). In the context of this research, normality embodies the singular universal truth and sanctioned knowledge that informs how the child can be *known* and then written about in the TLDS. The privileging of this knowledge and truth then generates an unequal distribution of power that is reflected through dominant discourses.

With regards to the TLDS both early childhood and primary school teachers, implicitly or explicitly, operate within four dominant discourses that draw on a shared, authorised knowledge. This in turn, determines how they understand and engage with children, families and each other and how they write about the child. These are the discourse of child as developing, the discourse of good parent, the discourse of parent as apprentice and the discourse of educator as expert.

These shared dominant discourses and how they circulate were also reflected in the way that early childhood and primary school co-researchers engaged with

the TLDS. To understand this, a closer examination of how early childhood and primary school co-researchers engaged with each of the sections within the TLDS revealed that there was a tangible hierarchy that most highly valued the information provided and shared by the educators, families and children respectively. This hierarchy was further determined and reinforced by the structure, format and requirements of the TLDS.

The discourse of child as developing

The dominant discourse of the child as developing positions the child as innocent, predictable and knowable. This is synonymous with viewing all children as incomplete and engaged in the process of attaining adulthood and independence. This situates children as lesser than adults who are privileged and perceived as more knowledgeable, able and powerful. As such, adults can use their power as a form of social control to regulate children according to expectations that “serve as norms, which are actually disguised as fact, as truth that should be applied to all” (Cannella, 1997, p.61.).

“But when they get to school, they have a lot of social problems. Because they’re not used to, that haven’t, they’re not old enough to have experienced enough life” (Phoebe, PPS1, p7, 215-218).

This positioning of children can be seen as a symptom of the emergence and perpetuation of developmental theories that draw primarily on Western perspectives (Burman, 2008; Cannella, 1997; Penn 2008; Silin, 1995.). These are based on the premise that learning and development follow a linear progression. Accordingly, children move towards and achieve, age-specific milestones as they progress through different stages until they reach adulthood, and achieve independence, as determined by prescribed outcomes. This warrants the belief in a universal truth that determines how knowledge, skills, understanding and behaviour can be prioritised and then measured against unspoken ‘norms’ to determine both a child’s ability and readiness for the next stage (Cannella, 1997, Silin, 2005; Burman, 2008).

“Right so I look at the child, I look at the learning outcomes and then I just create the child I know in there” (Pink, LDC3, p44, L: 1412-1415).

”...you’re thinking oh, is this other child getting behind now? When they’re not. They’re totally where they should be” (Mary, PPS5, p5, L: 161-164)”

The discourse of the child as developing is also evident in the way that children are expected to contribute to the TLDS (refer to Table 4.2). When asked the question, “How and when do you use the child section of the TLDS?” two of the early childhood co-researchers were initially confused about which section this was. This was because, as with the three remaining co-researchers, the child section was considered in conjunction with the parent section. Accordingly, all of the early childhood co-researchers felt it was the parents’ responsibility to complete this section with the child.

“But a lot of them I sent home and said do you mind sitting with your child and doing this part with them? Cos you know, I think that it was a good process for them to go through together” (Barbara, LDC4, p32, L: 1039-1042).

In the event that the child section wasn’t completed at home, four of the early childhood co-researchers offered children the option of drawing themselves or having a photo taken to include, but this was only if children chose to participate.

The response from three of the primary school co-researchers reflected similar sentiments. For these co-researchers, the self-portraits or photos held little value. On the other hand, the two remaining co-researchers felt that either a photo or self-portrait could be used to identify the child’s level of fine motor skill “on the developmental drawing continuum” (Louise, PPS2, p36, L: 1157) and provide insight into a child’s personality and temperament.

“And it was very interesting to see his had three people. And the whole picture was just in black. And all the faces sort of weren’t smiling. They looked very serious and that, for me, was an insight into him” (Jacqui, PPS3, p36, L: 1146-1149).

Table 4.2: The discourse of child as developing.

The child section of the TLDS	Interview question: How and when do you use the child section of the TLDS?	
<p>The underpinning statement; “There are many ways in which children can be, and should be involved in planning transition-to-school programs – it’s important to listen to their perspectives” (DEECD, 2009c, 2:4).</p> <p>The child’s contribution to the TLDS;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is half page long • asks children to provide a drawing of themselves or a photo • is optional 	EC co-researcher data	PS co-researcher data
	<p>“The child section? With the child asking questions?” (Pink, LDC3, p.33, L: 1056-1058)</p> <p>“I s’pose I should probably let the child choose the photo but that’s a bit too much work for me sometimes.” (Jane, LDC2, p22, L: 691-692)</p>	<p>“I don’t really use the child section. Is that the front bit?” (Mary, PPS5, p30, L: 984-985).</p> <p>“Sometimes we wanna know if they’ve been doctored? We look at it and we go right, did somebody prompt them? (Rachel, PPS4, p32, L: 1023-1027)</p>

Allowing only one way for a child’s voice to be heard suggests that what they have to offer is limited or, perhaps, irrelevant. It also means that children can only be known from a narrow perspective. In considering that discourses can be defined as “...socially organised frameworks of meaning that define categories and specify domains of what can be said and done” (Burman, 2008, p.2) when engaging with the TLDS it is clearly adults who are specifying what can be said and done by children. What does this say about how the child is valued? And

where is the child's voice? This absence of data pertaining to the child's contribution to the TLDS, and transition processes, only serves to reinforce the dominant discourse of child as developing whereby the child is positioned at the bottom of the hierarchy and is subsequently silenced.

The dominant discourses of parents

The first dominant discourse that can be identified for parents is the discourse of good parent. This reflects the belief that it is the parents' responsibility to provide a better life for their child with the intent of ensuring future success.

“And it, really the children who shine and who move through quite quickly would be the ones who have support from their parents at home” (Jacqui, PPS3, p19, L: 594-596).

This discourse operates within Western assumptions that two parents, namely a mother and a father, are requisite for the healthy, 'normal' development of a child (MacNaughton, 2005). This is underpinned by Bowlby's work on attachment theory that proposed that the nature of bonding between the mother and child at birth had the capacity to determine the child's emotional wellbeing (Birns, 1999; Franzblau, 1999; Burman, 2008; Mooney, 2010).

Bowlby's theory of attachment is reflective of the broader assumption, within the dominant discourse of developmental psychology, that children's early life experiences can be seen as an indicator for how they will experience adulthood. This is intrinsically connected to the second dominant discourse of parents – parent as apprentice. Within this discourse, parents are perceived as emotionally invested and subjective and because of this, they are unable to make rational and reasonable decisions about their child's development and progress (Cannella, 1997; MacNaughton, 2005; Burman, 2008.).

Therefore, a parent's knowledge is contextual and sits outside of the learning environment. Accordingly, educators share specialist knowledge incrementally

with apprentice parents as they show increasingly that they can be taught the knowledge they need to enable children to adhere to 'normal' patterns of learning and development (Cannella, 1997; MacNaughton, 2005; Burman, 2008.).

“And then I said I'll put them in your communication pocket. If you can fill them out, it's got instruction for you and things like that. And they were all very good. They all brought them back” (Anne, LDC1, p43, L: 1375-1378).

The discourses of the good parent and parent as apprentice are also evident in the way that parents are expected to contribute to the TLDS (refer to table 4.3). With regards to the parent section, all of the early childhood co-researchers acknowledged that the TLDS could provide relevant and useful information about the family and the child.

“I really encourage the families to put in a lot of information about their background and that kinda thing” (Pink, LDC3, p29, L: 925-927).

However, regardless of the perceived value of the parents' contribution, of greater significance to the early childhood co-researchers was how to ensure that parents engaged with the TLDS. A key tension that all the early childhood co-researchers discussed in relation to this was having the parent and child sections returned in a timely fashion.

“Term three is the time to get that, because it takes a lot of time to get them out to parents. And get them back. And not all parents bring them back” (Suzanne, SAK1, p36, L: 1160-1162).

Like the early childhood co-researchers, all of the primary school co-researchers thought that the parent section provided another opportunity for sharing different information about the child. Two of the co-researchers also mentioned that the parents' perspectives could help to identify what the child's interests were.

“It gives an insight into where they think their child is at” (Jacqui, PPS3, p37, L: 1206-1207).

“I think it’s always interesting to see the family’s point of view of the child’s strengths” (Mary, PPS5, p38, L: 971-971).

However there was an underlying implication that the information provided by the parents would be emotionally biased.

“Because that’s a parent thing. Like ooh, my child can do all things” (Phoebe, PPS1, p38, L: 1232-1234).

Three primary school co-researchers valued this section because they felt it provided insight into the parents and who they were in terms of personality, neediness and expected level of engagement and participation.

“And it gives me an insight into which people are prepared to put time and effort into doing something. You know, or which ones just sort of slap, dash something off” (Phoebe, PPS1, p47, L: 1509-1511).

Within the discourse of the parent as apprentice, the educator is positioned as the expert who must be deferred to because they have professional knowledge and understandings of children. This implies that what parents have to offer is also limited and only relevant when they are told what needs to be known.

“I think as well it gives parents a bit of language and understanding to sort of talk to teachers about as well” (Barbara, LDC4, p49, L: 1590-1592).

Table 4.3: The discourse of good parent/parent as apprentice

The parent section of the TLDS	Interview question: How and when do you use the parent section of the TLDS?"	
	EC co-researcher data	PS co-researcher data
<p>The underpinning statement; “Families are the most important people in children’s lives and play a central role in supporting children’s learning and development. They must be involved in the transition process – it’s not only children who experience changes on starting school.” (DEECD, 2009c, 2:4).</p> <p>The parents’ contribution to the TLDS;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is two pages long • what parents are asked to provide is prescribed by a series of statements requesting general information • optional 	<p>“I guess I find it good to have the family section that I could read while I was doing my section. Just to read their insights so I had a bit of an idea what they’re thinking” (Barbara, LDC4, p32, L: 1024-1031).</p>	<p>““I find that generally the parents know their kid. They do know their kids even if they don’t wanna admit that they know them” (Louise, PPS2, p40, L: 1305-1311).</p>

Drawing on the idea that discourses encompass “...our language, our ideas and how we understand and feel about who we are” (MacNaughton, 2003, p.180) educators prescribe the type and amount of information that parents can share. This shows parents what language and ideas are valued and this informs how they understand their roles.

“When the transition statement goes home with them I provide them with a letter about what’s enclosed in there, what information is shared and what’s expected” (Pink, LDC3, p48, L: 1536-1539).

The discourse of educator as expert

Within the discourse of educator as expert, one privileged adult holds all the relevant knowledge and can successfully impart that to children and families.

This is based on the premise that all children follow a universal sequence of growth and development and if educators are taught about this sequence and all it encompasses, they can learn how to use their understandings to predict measure and test what children know.

“I mean we’re professionals in this industry and we’ve studied for many years and we’ve read lots of research. Look there’s a lot to our background knowledge that families don’t have when we give them that information” (Suzanne, SAK1, pp55-56, L: 1789-1794).

By drawing on a framework of developmental milestones, educators can compare individual understandings of children to developmental norms and ascertain what the child needs to adhere to normal patterns of learning and development.

“If we don’t equip them with what they’re going to need, they’re going to be behind” (Mary, PPS5, p26, L: 825-827).

However, by drawing on the tenets of developmental psychology, educators “may be avoiding difficult philosophical and social issues while believing themselves to be acting in a “professional manner” (Silin, 1995, p.92.). The discourse of educator as entrepreneurial (Gibson, 2013) or professional, has received increasing attention as a result of the emergence of a neoliberal discourse that infers:

“Schooling and more broadly, education, are seen to have as their central purposes the production of the requisite quantity and quality of human capital within a given nation. That human capital is in turn regarded as necessary to ensuring the international competitiveness of the national economy” (Lingard, 2010, p.136).

Within neoliberal discourses the value of education is measured in terms of how successfully predetermined, performance-based learning outcomes can be tested. Accordingly, the higher the test score achieved, the more likely it is that an individual will become a valuable, contributing citizen to society. In this instance, human capital is seen, as the potential economic contribution an individual will make, in order to support Australia’s capacity to compete internationally in the labour market. Arguably, these underpinnings signal a move towards new accountabilities that reflect the growing influence that globalized political and economic agendas have on informing education policy (Ball, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Within the discourse of educator as entrepreneurial, there is increasing pressure on educators to work efficiently and competently in order to produce the successful outcomes necessitated by a performance-based accountability (Moss, 2010; Gibson, 2013). Correspondingly, there is a danger that as teachers are forced to teach to the outcomes (Lingard, 2010; Supovitz, 2009), there will be a narrowing of curricula and pedagogical approaches thereby positioning educators as objective technicians who simply deliver knowledge that preferences test preparation and discrete learning (Clark, 2010; Fenech, Sumison & Shepherd, 2010; Gibson 2013).

The discourse of the educator as expert is also evident in the way that educators are expected to contribute to the TLDS (refer to Table 4.4). In discussing the ways that they engaged with the educator section of the TLDS, all early childhood co-researchers saw their use of this section as synonymous with their use of the TLDS as an entire document. Primarily it was about summarising how they knew the child with the intent of sharing this information with families and primary school educators. This summary was directly related to the VEYLD

learning outcomes and all co-researchers felt that these provided a focus, or goal, that shaped and informed how data about each child was collected and documented.

“Like I use that then as a way that I structure my ongoing assessment of each child’s learning. So I am over the whole year, keeping a summary of each child’s learning in the five learning outcomes” (Barbara, LDC4, p38, L: 1235-1240).

Likewise, when engaging with the educator section of the TLDS, all of the primary school co-researchers also used it in the same way that they used the TLDS overall – to access information about each child. However, to access this information about each child, the co-researchers engaged with the educator section in different ways. Two co-researchers used it as a starting point for knowing the children and to liaise with early childhood educators to follow up on the information provided.

“And if there was anything we wanted to get a bit more further information on we would just ring the kinder” (Mary, PPS5, p29, L: 928-929).

Another co-researcher had developed a complex system of colour and shape coding the information to create a clear and easily accessible spreadsheet on each child.

“in this one I give them a triangle. So full triangle, I think she’s gonna be fine. Two sides of a triangle, ok. One little line, I’ve gotta watch this person” (Louise, PPS2, p33, L: 1067-1071).

This information was used as a beginning point to know where the child was at in order to identify or flag particular children or concerns. Primary school co-researchers then drew on this information to group children into classes, match

children with buddies based on similar interests and temperaments, determine the level of support needed by specific children and help plan the program.

“I was thinking in my mind, which children sounded like they fitted with children I already had in my class” (Phoebe, PPS1, p35, L: 1130-1132).

Table 4.4: The discourse of educator as expert

The educator section of the TLDS	Interview question: How and when do you use the educator section of the TLDS?"	
<p>The underpinning statement; “Educators from different settings have a lot to contribute to children’s positive start to school. They develop strong relationships with children and families and they bring professional knowledge and experiences about children’s learning and development. By sharing this knowledge and experience and working in partnerships with families, educators can recognise a child’s strengths and be supported to plan appropriate learning and teaching programs” (DEECD, 2009c, 2:4).</p> <p>The early childhood educator’s contribution to the TLDS;;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is four pages long • must be written in accordance with the five Learning Outcomes that are accepted as professional understandings of the child’s learning and behaviour • completion is a mandatory requirement for DEECD funding 	EC co-researcher data	PS co-researcher data
	<p>“I have started actually assessing children’s learning around those outcomes. When it comes to writing them I already have all my observations on identity” (Suzanne, SAK1, p47, L: 1517-1523)</p>	<p>“..highlight a deficit or something we need to be aware of or work on” (Louise, PPS2, p27, L: 858-860).</p> <p>“..we gather as much as we can to put them into groups” (Rachel, PPS4, p7, L: 197-200).</p>

In expecting the early childhood educator to provide the majority of the information, they are positioned as the holder of knowledge that is authorised. If discourses “are about what can be said and thought, but also who can speak when, where and with what authority” (Ball cited in Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p.8) it could be argued the early childhood educators, when positioned as experts, are privileged in what they can say, where and with what authority. This means that the knowledge that is drawn on to *know* the child will inform how they are understood. In the case of the TLDS the child can only be known through the learning outcomes within the EYLF and VEYLDF. It also implies that both early childhood and primary school educators know the most about a child’s learning and consequently, who they are.

But what does this all mean?

At first, the realisation that early childhood and primary school co-researchers understood and engaged with the TLDS through shared dominant discourses left me with a sense of smug satisfaction. Aha, I thought. I was right all along. Children and families are having power exercised over them by the educators, the early childhood educators are having power exercised over them by the primary school educators and the department is exercising power over everyone. I knew it! And now I had the data to prove it!

However, despite my certainty that the answer had been found, something was niggling at me. Tickling at the back of my mind and making me feel uncomfortable. I eventually realised that this discomfort came from the way the current reading of my data represented my co-researchers. I started thinking about how I would be able to authentically represent the good intention that I had felt when I interviewed all of the co-researchers. I started to think about how they would feel, reading how I had analysed the data. I had been overwhelmed by the generosity of these educators. They had willingly and openly shared their time, their knowledge, their practices and their expertise.

The positioning of my co-researchers as experts *wielding* power over children and families seemed not only simplistic, but also hypocritical and disrespectful. It denigrated their commitment, their creativity and their professionalism. And, so, my niggle grew and grew, until it became the impetus for a renewed exploration. I was on a search for other ways to read the data; other ways to think about the way power was, and can be, operating. Given my pre-data dabbling with post-structuralist ideas and thinking, I should have been better prepared for the sense of chaos and not knowing, the *messiness* that was about to descend upon me as I delved deeper into the why and how of the distribution of power. I should also have been prepared to discover that you can never be *truly* prepared. But I am still learning...

Chapter 5

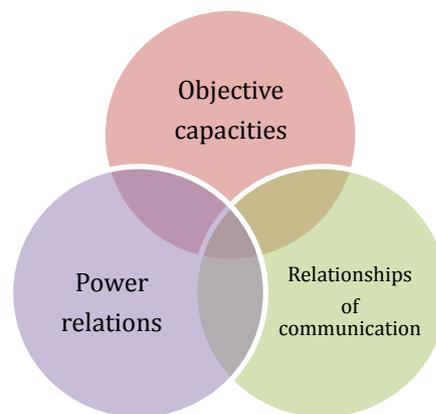
Using power for good (disrupting silence) or evil (disrupting privilege)

If those who have access to the knowledge that is privileged hold power, then in the context of my research, the way that early childhood and primary school co-researchers understand and engage with the TLDS clearly positions them as those who hold the power. But for me, two questions remained: *why* and *how* was power distributed in this way?

Domains and the distribution of power

Foucault proposed that the distribution of power is determined by the interaction between three domains: objective capacities, relationships of communication and power relations (Faubion 1994). Although these domains overlap and are not mutually exclusive, the emphasis that is placed on any given domain and the way they interact with each other informs the model through which they are communicated and the subsequent distribution of power.

Figure 5.1: Factors that influence the distribution of power



Accordingly, the interaction of these three domains could feasibly explain how the unequal distribution of power positions educators as the experts. But now, my post-structural radar was really up. This explanation wasn't complex enough. Messy enough. It was too neatly packaged. What was it that I was missing?

The ambiguity of power relations and dominant discourses

For a second time my data findings had lulled me into a false sense of security and complacency. Understanding the TLDS through shared dominant discourses? Check! Engagement with the TLDS through the *same* shared dominant discourses? Check! A viable explanation for the unequal distribution of power? Check! However, it didn't take long to realise that this way of thinking positioned the experiences of children, families and educators and how they engaged with transitions practices and the TLDS as black and white. In doing this, I found myself unconsciously adhering to the notions of universality that I was attempting to question and disrupt. Inadvertently, I had been seduced by the familiarity of what I thought I knew to be true. I had been drawn back into a search for *the* answer. I had forgotten that in choosing a post-structural framework for my research I had been deliberately choosing a path that pushed me out of my comfort zone and into the unknown. I had chosen this to illuminate the complexity of the ways that multiple discourses are operating and how these inform the ways that power circulates within and through the TLDS. And so, it was back to the data, the books and the drawing board for me.

Confronting my personal biases

Up until this point, my thinking about discourse and power had been based on my pre-data reading of post-structural authors such as Cannella (1997), MacNaughton, (2005) Silin (2005), Ball (2006) and Burman (2008). These had provided a sound basis for understanding and exploring how power can operate through discourses. But I now realised that a deeper analysis was required to support me in thinking about my co-researchers and power in different ways. And so I found myself reading "Discipline and Punish" (Foucault, 1977). It was here that I stumbled across the first Foucauldian metaphor that would help me to re-think and re-read my data – the humble table.

“In the 18th century, the table was both a technique of power and a procedure of knowledge. It was a question of organizing the multiple, of providing oneself with an instrument to cover it and master it; it was a question of imposing upon it an ‘order’” (Foucault, 1977, p.148).

This quote was a revelation to me. I realised that when I had first started reading the data from the research, I had been compelled to order it, regulate it and theme it, to discern explainable patterns. My entire data analysis process had consisted of creating table after table to condense, refine and contain the data. Only now did I see that the data could only represent the co-researchers in one particular way because *I* was only drawing on a limited understanding of power and discourse.

The elusiveness of power - power relations and docile bodies

While power is unquestionably circulating within and through the TLDS, I now recognised that it was *my* personal perspective that interpreted power as negative, oppressive and undesirable. In a way, I held power responsible for the hierarchical positioning of children, families and educators. However, according to Foucault, power cannot be perceived or understood as a tangible substance or singular entity (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1993; Dussel, 2010). Instead, he used the term ‘power relations’ to convey that power is not inert, but dynamic and constantly shifting. This ever-changing nature of power relations is a reflection of the interplay between diverse forms of power and the multiple contexts through which power can circulate and operate (Faubion 1994; Dussel, 2010). Intrinsic to understanding this interplay, is the recognition that everyone participates in power relations and consequently,

“What defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action that does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead it acts upon their actions; an action upon an action on possible or actual future or present actions” (Foucault cited in Faubion 1994, p.340).

One implication of this is that individuals operating in power relationships, whether as those exercising power over others or those having power exercised over them, continue to be in a position where they can hypothetically choose how to respond, how to react and which actions they will take. In this way, power is not understood as good or bad, but rather, it is multidirectional and has the capacity to be repressive or productive, to enable or disable and to provoke compliance or resistance (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1993; Mills, 1997; Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001; Dussel, 2010; Fenech, Sumison & Shepherd, 2010). Nevertheless, despite this nebulous positioning of power relations, when an individual or a group exercises power over another individual or group, it can elicit a relationship where there is an unequal distribution of power.

Believing that power-relations are located in and exercised through bodies, Foucault saw bodies as the personification of sites where power could be either produced or repressed (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1993; Dussel, 2010). Foucault referred to these bodies as docile, explaining “a body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and then improved” (Foucault, 1977, p.136). Accordingly, docile bodies are perceived as passive, inanimate subjects, compliantly, waiting to be moulded to fit historical, societal and cultural expectations. It is this potential docility of bodies that positions them as susceptible to the domination, exploitation and subjugation that is characterised by mechanisms of power (Foucault, 1977). To illustrate this, Foucault famously drew on the Panopticon as a metaphor for how disciplinary power could be used to ‘normalise’ individuals.

The observer and the observed – regimes of truth

The Panopticon was designed to locate subjects in space and distribute them in relation to each other so that they were segregated and hierarchically organised (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1993). The central location of the tower within the Panopticon ensured that “the inmate is not only visible to the supervisor, he is only visible to the supervisor” (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1993, p. 189). However, because the subject cannot know when the supervisor is watching he must

behave appropriately, as if he is under constant surveillance. In this way, subjects become self-surveilling and this can serve to demonstrate “how the effects of knowledge and power create particular kinds of subjects who are subjugated through ‘regimes of truth’” (Gravata & Cornwall, 2001, p.73).

MacNaughton (2005) defines regimes of truth as “a set of truths within a given field that generates authoritative consensus about what can be done and how” (p.30). Foucault elaborated, explaining that regimes of truth encompass discourses that are seen and accepted as the truth; processes, systems and procedures that differentiate between true and false and endorse these differentiations; the use of particular techniques and strategies to acquire truth and those in positions of authority who validate what is true (Gore, 1993). These truths are most typically aligned with institutions or disciplinary practices that prescribe rules and norms that generate and perpetuate power relations and practices that are politically, socially and culturally constructed (Cohen, 2008). Accordingly, Gore (1993) proposed that a regime of truth “conveys the connection between power and knowledge which is produced by and produces a specific art of government” (p.55) whereby government refers to the governing of an individual’s conduct, actions, thoughts and feelings.

The silent duplicity of disciplinary power

For me this resonated with Foucault’s thinking around disciplinary power. Foucault described disciplinary power as “diffuse in operation and less visible than sovereign power” (Foucault, 1980, cited in Cohen, 2008, p.16) and posited that it can be exercised implicitly and without the knowledge or consent of individuals or groups of people operating within a given power relation. For this reason, disciplinary power can be used to “train and normalize individuals” (Cohen, 2008, p.16) and this is often enacted through technologies of normalisation (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1993; Gore, 1993). For me, this was epitomised by two of the fundamental contradictions that emerged from the data.

Firstly, primary school co-researchers insist school readiness is not tantamount to academic readiness. However, it is information about skills and knowledge linked to literacy and numeracy that all primary school co-researchers most highly valued.

“Yeah, but it’s just hard I guess because we don’t report against that. So then you’ve gotta always think here’s the developmental continuum you know. We use that a lot which is numeracy and literacy. And it doesn’t refer to it there, either, so” (Mary, PPS5, p50, L: 1632-1641).

The privileging of particular knowledge to understand what readiness means draws from the knowledge teachers engage with in pre-service *training*. The profession through practice, policy and framework documents and even professional development opportunities, then perpetuates and *normalises* this same knowledge.

As a consequence of this, the second contradiction is that the information provided by the early childhood educators is not the information wanted by the primary school educators. If the information shared is defined and measured in terms of its knowledge value, what is knowledge? How is it defined and measured? Why? How does this inform whether the information shared is relevant and meaningful?

Normalising technologies - a question of authority and dominance

According to Dreyfus & Rabinow (1993) “Normalising technologies operate by establishing a common definition of goals and procedures which take the form of manifestos and ever more forceful, agreed upon examples of how a well ordered domain of human activity should be organised” (p.198). Grounded in dominant understandings of *the* truth, technologies of normalisation are used to individualise, classify and categorise subjects based primarily on their behaviour and how they conduct themselves. By validating what is normal, these

technologies identify and isolate behaviour and practices that are perceived as anomalous.

Those with access to the privileged knowledge and the authorised truth are then able to exercise practices of power that give them permission to intervene and 'normalise' subjects (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1993). These practices of power generate rules that determine appropriate behaviour and conduct and subsequently, normalisation technologies become self-perpetuating mechanisms of power. Consequently, "the discourses and actions associated with professional institutions and practices have generated disciplinary power over teachers (who are mostly women) and children. Standards have been created through which individuals judge and limit themselves, through which they construct a desire to be 'good', 'normal' or both (Cannella, 1997, p.121).

To understand how normalising technologies and regimes of truth operate simultaneously to generate self-perpetuating mechanisms of power, I have drawn on the eight techniques of power identified by Gore (1998) in her research on how power relations operate and circulate in pedagogy. These include; surveillance, normalisation, exclusion, classification, distribution, individualisation, totalisation and regulation. Taking into consideration that these eight techniques of power circulate within the TLDS it could be argued that the TLDS operates as a self-perpetuating mechanism of power.

The TLDS as a mechanism of power

Observation as surveillance

The data revealed that four of the early childhood co-researchers valued "providing real information" (Anne, LDC1, p28, L: 915-916) that was based on their relationship with children and knowing each child. Within early childhood and across education more generally, this *knowing* reflects understandings of children and how they learn and develop that are deeply embedded within a developmental framework.

“...it was so worthwhile. And I really felt like...when the parents came to me and said, I cried because you know my child so well. I felt it was true” (Barbara, LDC4, p30, L: 967-970).

Historically, this underpinning developmental framework proposes that educators can *know* the child. And in knowing the child, educators can predict where children should be at any given point in time with regards to their learning, their skills and their abilities. It is this apparent ability to predict where children should be that has given educators the licence to make decisions about whether children are ready or not ready for school. This understanding of the child is embedded, and in some ways implicitly perpetuated, through the way that teachers are educated, the documents that support the profession and how educators view themselves as professionals.

“So if you can incorporate your own opinions and professionalism or your skills and knowledge on development, then that’s great. Because the other person who doesn’t know will understand it better than what the framework says” (Pink, LDC3, p51, L: 1647-1655).

The way that the behaviour and conduct of subjects is observed and which truths are used to frame these observations is referred to as *surveillance* (Gore, 1998; MacNaughton 2005). In the context of the research, both early childhood and primary school co-researchers used observations to ascertain children’s level of skill and ability, in order to determine how they would transition from an early childhood to a primary school context. This information was then presented as a ‘snapshot’ that focused on documenting children’s likes/dislikes, strengths/weaknesses and areas needing improvement or support. Subsequently, early childhood co-researchers could identify areas that needed improvement and flag children with additional needs or behavioural issues.

“..you can see which areas that they may need some support in. Areas that might be things that are concerns or things that are their strengths that you can work on that” (Barbara, LDC4, p7, L: 216-221).

Similarly, primary school co-researchers used the information provided to flag children with behavioural concerns or issues, highlight children with additional needs and identify which children needed individualised support.

“...hopefully the teachers will highlight any difficulties. Any strategies that they have used that have been successful” (Louise, PPS2, p5, L: 155-161).

This was closely linked with the requisite skills primary school co-researchers believed would enable children to develop their own learner identity. However, primary school co-researchers also implicitly valued information about academic knowledge that they deemed important within the educational context of their settings.

This suggested that while all co-researchers acknowledged the significance of identifying each child’s strengths and interests, the information most sought after focused on flagging and assessing children with additional needs, or behavioural issues, in order to identify areas that need improvement. In this case, forewarned is forearmed and educators can then devise and implement strategies to provide children with developmentally appropriate support.

“We write notes. We put notes on the side. So if there’s something that we need to find out more about, we flag that. Ring the kinder or we need to speak to this person (Rachel, PPS4, p29, L: 936-939).

The four steps from normalisation to individualisation

This shared focus on identifying the skills and knowledge that children need to improve or extend upon implies that the value of information is founded on a deficit-based approach to understanding children's learning and development. This was measured against the five Learning Outcomes of the VELYDF that are used to write the TLDS and these represent the authorised standards that are used to predict and measure a child's readiness for school. These learning outcomes are underpinned by developmental understandings of how children learn and develop and draw on developmental milestones that prescribe specific *norms*. These *norms* are then used to *individualise* and *classify* children in terms of whether they are ready for school or not. The children who are not ready are *excluded* on the grounds that they have not met the requisite developmental milestones.

Accordingly, there is a strong emphasis on privileging knowledge that allows early childhood and primary co-researchers to flag children and identify behavioural issues or concerns. In privileging this knowledge, they reinforce the idea that there is one, singular truth about what children can and can't do and how this reflects their readiness for school and informs their transition experience. Framing readiness in this way is informed by fundamental underpinning theories within early childhood that draw on developmental, behavioural, cognitive and socio-cultural paradigms. Each of these paradigms is historically linked to and constructed upon findings of key theorists such as: Rousseau, Watson, Bandura, Freud, Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner (Cannella, 2005; MacNaughton, 2003; Penn, 2008).

While each paradigm has distinct understandings about how children learn and develop, there are some shared assumptions. Most notably, that the child is knowable and that learning and development progresses as children move sequentially through prescriptive stages until they reach a clearly defined endpoint, adulthood. This implies that learning and development are linear, predictable and immutable. Consequently, requisite goals that draw on

knowledge that is privileged can be used to identify and measure markers of readiness and success.

From this perspective, identification is necessary to understand “what they already know” (Rachel, PPS, p4, L: 125) so that appropriate intervention can be exercised to move the child to “where we need to take them” (Mary, PPS5, p4. L: 126). Consequently, the children who are ready for school are ranked so that they can be *distributed* into the appropriate class with the appropriate peers and teacher. This *distribution* is often based on further *individualisation* and *classification* that flags children or behaviours that are seen as concerning or high-risk. This assumes firstly, that educators know what the child needs and can subsequently make them ready. Secondly, it assumes that children perform readiness in the same way and implies that all of the co-researchers see readiness from a narrow, single perspective. Consequently how knowledge is understood and valued can be linked to the notion of a single, universal truth.

Totalisation plus regulation equals universality

In relation to the TLDS and transition practices, the knowledge that is privileged by early childhood co-researchers is prescribed by the five learning outcomes within the EYLF and VEYLDF: identity, community, wellbeing, learning and communication. This means that the measurement of a child’s progress against these learning outcomes becomes the assessment of individual merit, readiness for school and subsequent ability to experience a smooth transition. The underlying premise of these practices is that educators can ‘know the child’. In knowing the child, they can then predict, measure and control whether the child is ready for school, based on shared common understandings of the requisite skills and knowledge. This ‘knowing’ corresponds with the idea of *totalisation* which positions understandings of children as universal. This is only exacerbated by the mandating of the TLDS which *normalises* which particular truths early childhood and primary school educators are regulated to draw on to determine how they ‘know’ and ‘understand’ children.

In the case of the research, the privileging of developmental understandings of learning and the language used to express this can be linked to the privileging of single, universal truths. The TLDS becomes the embodiment of the knowledge that is privileged and consequently, reflects the dominant discourses that circulate through the TLDS, positioning a particular truth as the *only* truth. In the case of school readiness, the requisite skills and knowledge are measured against developmental norms and milestones. This reinforces the circulation of dominant discourses and unequal distribution of power that position educators as experts, parents as apprentices and children as developing. The way in which this understanding of the child is embedded and implicitly perpetuated through policy, documents and literature together with the education of teaching professionals, continues to bestow educators with *all* the power *all* of the time.

But, does it have to be this way?

Power and choice – to resist or to comply?

I confess, that when I initially proposed that the TLDS operated as a mechanism of power, I expected that this would signal the end of my search. But no. There was more. Always there was more. What I hadn't accounted for was that due to the very ambiguity of power, discourses are not mutually exclusive (Faubion, 1994; Gore, 1998). Accordingly, in the same way that compliance can lead to the subjugation of docile bodies, the resistance of docile bodies can also *disrupt* the potential for the unequal distribution of power.

This means that subjects who are acted upon by discourses while simultaneously choosing which ones to adopt, constitute discursive identities and practices (Gibson 2013) that can be productive or descriptive (Bradbury, 2012), depending on the context. Consequently, the chosen discourse can enable or constrain (Gibson, 2013) the way that early childhood and primary school educators understand and enact their professional identities. Furthermore, the adopted discourse can also reflect the choice to comply with or resist power relations that are exercised over educators through dominant discourses of

professional identity. For this reason, Foucault identified the need for considering power relations from a perspective that drew on points of *resistance* to power as a catalyst for understanding where power relations are situated and the methods by which they are applied (Faubion, 1994).

In the context of this research, early childhood and primary school co-researchers simultaneously comply with and resist power relations that are being exercised and that circulate within and through multiple dominant discourses. For example, early childhood co-researchers know and accept that they are mandated to complete a TLDS for every child. However, while they comply with this, they also choose points of resistance. These might include using 'coded' language to write the TLDS, choosing to cut and paste information, writing the statement with the parent as the intended audience, or insisting on extra time or pay to complete the TLDS. So, although they may not control *what* they write *about*, they control *how* they write it and for *whom*.

Likewise, the primary school co-researchers comply by receiving and reading the TLDSs, but their point of resistance could be seen in the way that they use them. Although the TLDSs are not being used to inform transition programs, they are being used in complex and elaborate ways to understand and know the children moving into the classrooms. So, while both early childhood and primary school co-researchers are using the TLDS, their points of resistance are about tailoring the TLDS to their individual needs and contexts. In doing this, the TLDS has contributed to the building of shared, professional relationships between early childhood and primary school educators. However, this has been managed and directed by the educators in their own way and on their own terms.

Multiple readings and a kaleidoscope of possibilities

So, after my long and tenuous pilgrimage to understanding power, where did I find myself? What had I learnt? How did I see things differently? I realised that power had never been identified or named explicitly by any of the co-researchers in the data. I had only been able to see it because of my engagement with, and exploration of, discourse and power through post-structural theories. I had recognised that I needed something else to explain what the data was telling me. Considering power and discourse, specifically through Foucault's work, highlighted the complexity of transition and the TLDS. Recognising this allowed me to read the data differently. It provided me with the possibility of multiple understandings. It compelled me to critically reflect on my personal bias. It helped me to represent and respect people differently.

Initially, thinking about all of this felt like trying to put together a mosaic, where each tiny piece of information fitted together in a specific way to create a particular picture. But now I imagined my data as seen through a kaleidoscope. At first I see power as oppressive and limiting. I have the answer! Then Foucault (1994) reminds me that there are many truths. I twist the tube and the shapes and colours tumble and turn. Suddenly, power is operating differently. Now I see how power can be distributed unequally. I have the answer! Then Gore (1998) reminds me that power and discourse are ambiguous. I twist the tube again. Shapes shift, colours change and light moves. I see it all from a slightly different angle. Power continues to operate differently. I have the answer! And so on, and so on. The possible combinations of the colours and shapes are infinite. And finally it makes sense – instead of messiness that I can never understand or control, I see possibilities that don't need to be controlled and that can be understood in a multitude of ways.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

I began this research wanting to know whether the TLDS was meeting the intentions of making transition smoother, and creating a shared professional language and relationship between early childhood and primary school educators. In order to explore this, I posed the question:

“How do early childhood and primary school teachers understand and use the Transition Learning and Development Statement?”

My major question was further informed by the following minor questions:

- *How does the TLDS address the key issues identified by the relevant stakeholders?*
- *What are the benefits and challenges of using the TLDS for early childhood and primary school teachers?*
- *How does language support and disengage early childhood and primary school teachers’ engagement with the TLDS?*
- *What are the dominant discourses that circulate through the TLDS?*

Accordingly, this chapter will illustrate the key outcomes of the research in relation to these questions. It will outline both the expected and unexpected findings and identify the emergent gaps and tensions within the data. The limitations of the research will also be considered, the implications of these findings will be discussed and finally, recommendations for future practice, research and policy development will be proposed.

Revisiting the intentions and questions

Understanding and engaging with the TLDS

In my research, early childhood and primary school co-researchers discussed their understanding of and engagement with the TLDS in two main ways. Firstly, all of the co-researchers recognised the TLDS as a document for sharing information about what is known about each child. Within this understanding, for all of the co-researchers, identifying children who were not ready for school and who may need additional support to make a smooth transition was identified as the fundamental purpose of the TLDS. Both early childhood and primary school co-researchers measured readiness for school in terms of social and emotional competence. These were most often associated with self-help and self-regulatory skills. Some examples included; being able to separate from family, independent toileting, interacting with peers and adults confidently and demonstrating emotional resilience. Drawing on this information, primary school co-researchers also used the TLDS to determine which classes children would go into, which children would need additional or specialist support and how what was known about each child could inform their transition programs.

Identifying the key issues

As highlighted in the literature review, the most salient issue identified was that early childhood and primary school co-researchers had different expectations of the TLDS. Early childhood co-researchers wanted to be able to document and share how well they knew each child and in doing so, showcase their professional expertise. Primary school co-researchers wanted to be able to draw on relevant, concise and easily accessible information about each child in order to identify children who needed additional or specialist support, designate children into classes and inform their transition programs.

However, while early childhood and primary school co-researchers agreed that the TLDS was a valuable document for sharing information, it was the type of information, and the value ascribed to that information, that emerged from the data as the second key issue. A clear distinction between skills and knowledge and how these might inform school readiness and smooth transition was recognised by both early childhood and primary school co-researchers. Early childhood co-researchers placed a higher value on social and emotional skills and while primary school co-researchers agreed with this, they also implicitly placed a higher value on academic knowledge associated with literacy and numeracy.

The benefits and challenges

In their discussions on their engagement with the TLDS, early childhood and primary school co-researchers highlighted two shared benefits and four shared challenges (refer to Table 4.1). The first benefit of the TLDS was the acknowledgement of its value for sharing meaningful information regarding what was known about each child. Primary school co-researchers saw this as beneficial because it allowed them to identify children who might need additional support to make a smooth transition into school. Early childhood co-researchers saw this as beneficial because it allowed them to demonstrate their knowledge of the child and this was perceived as a positive reflection of their professional expertise.

The second and most surprising benefit of the TLDS was that both early childhood and primary school co-researchers saw it as a catalyst for building shared professional relationships. This research finding illustrates clearly that for these educators, the TLDS is meeting the intended outcome of creating a shared professional language and relationship between early childhood and primary school educators.

With regards to the challenges of using the TLDS, both early childhood and primary school researchers identified parental consent, time factors, the use of

strength-based language and the focus on a single transition practice as problematic. Early childhood co-researchers also stressed that not knowing whether the TLDS was used or how it was used, was the most significant challenge for them.

Understanding and interpreting language

When I first considered the question “How does language support and disengage early childhood and primary school educators’ engagement with the TLDS?” I was thinking about language superficially, in terms of the words that might be used and shared by early childhood and primary school educators. This understanding of language resonated with my research findings that early childhood and primary school co-researchers openly acknowledged that strength-based language was used within the TLDS to describe skills and knowledge in relation to school readiness and smooth transition.

However, in the course of engaging with post-structural ideas I started to see that language and discourse are not mutually exclusive. In fact, dominant discourses are about how language is used. This was evidenced by the shared, implicit understanding that strength-based language represented a particular language code. In order for primary school co-researchers to understand what the early childhood co-researchers were really trying to say, this code needed to be deciphered. This was a challenge for early childhood co-researchers when trying to share relevant and authentic information through the TLDS. Likewise, it was a challenge for the primary school co-researchers who needed to first have an awareness of the code, and then, the ability to decode what was written in order to use the shared information effectively. Both early childhood and primary school co-researchers also felt these challenges were only exacerbated by the additional requirement of parental consent prior to sharing the TLDS.

The circulation of dominant discourses

As anticipated, the research highlighted that there were four key dominant discourses that circulated throughout the TLDS. These included: the child as developing, the parent as apprentice/good parent and the educator as expert. However, an unexpected finding was the recognition that both the early childhood and primary school co-researchers shared the discourses in operation within the TLDS. Likewise, the realization that the positioning of educators as expert informs the construction of professional identities and accountability was also unexpected.

Expecting the unexpected

In some ways, everything that has been revealed in the data as the research has unfolded has been surprising to me. Although I knew that the early childhood co-researchers would be using the TLDS, I hadn't anticipated that they would be doing this so willingly and whole-heartedly. I hadn't expected to find that being able to share what they knew about children with other educators would leave them with such a sense of professional pride. I had assumed that the primary school co-researchers would not be using the TLDS at all. Instead I found more willing and dedicated educators who valued the information they were given, and used it in creative and diverse ways, to support the children and families who were making transitions into their spaces.

But, having come in with an expectation that there was an almost insurmountable professional divide between early childhood and primary school educators, what has been most surprising, and confronting, for me has been discovering how much early childhood and primary school educators have in common. The research has clearly shown that there is a shared understanding of the purpose of the TLDS. There are shared benefits and challenges and a shared coded language for early childhood and primary school co-researchers when using the TLDS. Finally, the research has emphasised that all of the co-researchers are operating within and through shared dominant discourses.

The ramifications of this are that, not only do early childhood and primary school educators see the TLDS as a valuable document, they are also using the TLDS in meaningful ways that they have personalised to suit their individual requirements. And in doing this, the TLDS has become a document that *has* encouraged and supported early childhood and primary school educators to build professional relationships with each other. However, there was a general consensus that the TLDS needed to be considered as one of a suite of transition practices that could support children's movement from early childhood to primary school contexts. Accordingly, both early childhood and primary co-researchers believed that the TLDS would be more effective if supplemented with phone calls, face-to-face meetings and shared professional development.

Emergent gaps and tensions.

In relation to the research questions, the most obvious gap to emerge from the data is that it is still uncertain whether the TLDS makes transition to school smoother for children. And if so, how the TLDS facilitates this is also unknown.

Other interesting tensions emerged from the data, but couldn't be explored in this thesis. Firstly, early childhood and primary school co-researchers had different understandings of the requisite skills and knowledge for school and how to measure these. Secondly, all co-researchers believed that the need for parental consent could influence the type of information shared and potentially misrepresent a child's skills and knowledge. Thirdly, the continued use of additional practices and documents by primary schools was seen as problematic. Finally, the effect of dominant discourses on the construction of professional identity, and how this corresponds with performance and accountability, requires further investigation.

What were the limitations?

One of the key limitations of this research was that it was not able to take into consideration the perspectives of all of the stakeholders who have a vested interest in transition to school. This means that the data only reflects the views of the early childhood and primary school co-researchers.

The samples size for this research was also small, including only five early childhood co-researchers and five primary school co-researchers. Those who participated did so enthusiastically and actively and this can be attributed to their own personal interest in transition and the TLDS. Additionally, because of the 'working to rule' industrial action early in 2013, all of the primary school co-researchers were recruited from the Northern inner city region and these cannot be seen to represent the majority.

Lastly, the size of my Masters thesis was a limitation. Despite the density and richness of the data collected there's only so much that can be discussed within a prescribed 22, 000 word limit.

What does it all mean - confrontation, revelation and kaleidoscopic understandings

I approached this research with an absolute 'us' and 'them' attitude. 'Us' being the early childhood educators and 'them' being the primary school educators. I positioned myself and my early childhood colleagues as the silenced, oppressed 'other', and primary school educators as the privileged, all-powerful 'oppressors'. What I have learnt through my research disrupts and challenges this, **completely**. I have been confronted by my personal biases and compelled to question and reflect on all that I held to be true. It is the hardest work I have ever done. And it has only been possible because I have drawn on post-structural theories that have given me permission to consider alternative understandings and possibilities.

Drawing on these alternative understandings and possibilities, in particular Foucault's thinking around power relations, has allowed me to think and talk about power differently and recognise it as fluid and dynamic. This suggests that power cannot be given or taken, that it is neither good nor bad. Instead, at any given moment, in any given context, power can empower or disempower. Enable or disable. With this understanding came a revelation. If power relations inform how a dominant discourse is taken up and used, then dominant discourses could also be seen as ever-changing and ambiguous. In true post-structural spirit, this also allowed me to consider how power, knowledge and truth can be used to disrupt, critique and reconceptualise particular ways of thinking, acting, speaking and being. Considering power relations and dominant discourses in this way means that there are spaces for resistance. That at any point, children, families and early childhood and primary school educators can choose to resist or comply. This means that instead of operating in a singular, narrow way, power relations have the potential to circulate through the TLDS in a way that reflects the multiple perspectives of children, families and early childhood and primary school educators.

Consequently, the implications of the research findings are interwoven with my evolving understanding of the complexity of how multiple discourses are operating, and how power operates within and through the TLDS. For me, this signifies dramatic changes to the way I perceive transition, the TLDS and relationships between early childhood and primary school educators. I can now recognise how the positioning of early childhood and primary school co-researchers within shared dominant discourses illuminates the subtle but meaningful connections between them. I understand language differently now because I see it as connected to discourses. I can appreciate the value of the TLDS for building educator relationships and providing early childhood co-researchers with a platform for sharing professional knowledge and expertise. And I have been humbled and re-inspired by all of my co-researchers who have shown themselves to be passionate, committed and hard working professionals who only want the best for the children and families they work with.

But it is only through my research and being exposed to different ideas, theories and thinking that I have been able to consider these alternative understandings and possibilities. I have also realised that educators, *all* educators, can only draw on what they know. In the context of this research, this means that the child could only be known in one way, the parent could only be understood in one way and professional identity could only be constructed and expressed in one way. In drawing on singular, narrow understandings, practices and policies can only be re-mapped, not re-imagined.

Recommendations and where to next?

Further research

This research established that there are additional questions around what informs and facilitates a smooth transition to school for children, families and early childhood and primary school educators. In doing this, it highlighted the need for further research to:

- determine whether the TLDS is facilitating a smoother transition to school and how it facilitates this;
- ascertain what children and family perspectives are on the value of the TLDS;
- explore the different ways that skills and knowledge are understood and valued by early childhood and primary school educators, and
- examine the influence of performance and accountability on the construction of professional identity.

Given the chance to engage in future research I would like to draw on diverse methodologies and theoretical underpinnings as a catalyst for creating dialogue and change that facilitates different understandings of and engagement with shared discourses. An example of this could be the implementation of an action research project that looks at larger and more diverse sample sizes over longer

periods of time. To extend the relationships between early childhood and primary school educators, this could include pairing early childhood and primary school educators and tracking how relationships can be created and developed in multiple ways.

The importance of on-going professional development

The research also highlighted the need for more frequent and diverse professional development. It is recommended that this include:

- ongoing shared professional development for early childhood and primary school educators;
- informal professional development such as engaging with contemporary literature and publications, and
- formal ongoing, professional development sessions that encourage and support educators to engage with and debate diverse and contemporary knowledge and theories.

Policy review and development

The final recommendation is that these and similar research findings be used as a catalyst for policy developers to review and consider how to embed contemporary theories and knowledge within policies and accompanying documents. This also necessitates ongoing evaluation of current transition practices with a view to adapting them to correspond with the findings of the literature review. Doing so would require transition practices to be:

- reflective of local community contexts;
- informed by responsive, reflective and reciprocal relationships between all the relevant stakeholders;
- inclusive of a repertoire of transition practices, and
- evaluated and updated regularly

The collective implications of this for transition are that rather than focusing on a single practice, alternative transitions practices that draw on multiple perspectives could be introduced. Drawing again on the metaphor of a kaleidoscope, if children, families and educators are represented by the different coloured shapes within a kaleidoscope, then in a single frame they are positioned in a particular way. However, each time you turn the kaleidoscope, these shapes and colours continue to shift so that the frame you see is different every time. In this way, the kaleidoscope represents how power relations between children, families and educators could draw on multiple perspectives and in doing so, power is circulated and exercised in multiple ways. This allows educators, early childhood and primary school, to think about and practice transition in ways that are more meaningful and equitable for children, families and educators.

Post-script

While in the process of finalising my conclusion, I met with three friends who are experienced and passionate early childhood educators. In the throes of completing yet another round of TLDSs, they bombarded me with questions about my research. “So, are the primary school teachers really using them?” “How?” “Did they say if they’re valuable or not?” Despite three years immersed in my research and all my hard work, I sat there speechless. In the end, my responses felt generic and vague. “Yes, the primary school teachers do use them” and “The early childhood educators feel acknowledged because their expertise is recognised.” Really? After three years this was all I could say?

Later that day, back at my desk, I questioned why I hadn’t shared my research findings? The reading and the thinking I’d done and the enormity of this for changing my understandings? I realised that although these three women are intelligent, articulate and dedicated professionals, I had felt that my theorising of transition and the TLDS could overwhelm or alienate them. And me. I was reminded that I began my research as a frustrated early childhood educator, and that an important part of doing the research was acknowledging that it wasn’t only an intellectual exercise. This means that my next challenge will be thinking

about the ways that my research findings can be made accessible and available for children, families and professionals in a way that can be translated into every day practice. But how *do* you unpack dominant discourses in the every day?

Initially I had believed that early childhood and primary school educators used the TLDS in different ways. Discovering that early childhood and primary school educators operate in shared dominant discourses had a profound effect on me. It gave me permission to understand and perceive the circulation of power differently. This changed the way I felt about and respected both early childhood and primary school colleagues. I now saw them as strategic and political – choosing to exercise power in their own ways to comply and resist. My position on the TLDS also shifted. My question changed from “Why do we need the TLDS?” to “Why is the TLDS the only mandated practice?” This shifting in my own thinking has allowed me to see a kaleidoscope of possibilities, and reminded me of the importance of the theoretical and conceptual work needed to make meaningful changes that can be enacted within practice.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Consent form

I,.....(Name of participant)
of.....
(Participant's address) **hereby consent** to be a participant of a research study to
be undertaken by Dr Kylie Smith and Claudine Lam (Name of investigator). I
understand that the purpose of the research is to contribute to the following
project:

**Transition and Learning Development Statements:
(mis)understandings and practices.**

I acknowledge that:

- (1) The aims, methods, and anticipated benefits, and possible risks/hazards of the research study have been explained to me to my satisfaction - including the possibility that I could be identified due to small number of participants being interviewed for this research
- (2) Individual interviews will be audio-taped, transcribed and the transcriptions used for data analysis.
- (3) The information I provide will be coded and kept separately from my name and address.
- (4) Results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in academic and professional journals.
- (5) My results will not be released to any person except at my request and on my authorisation.
- (6) I can choose to be named or referred to by pseudonym in any reports or publications arising from the study.
- (7) I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied, in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease.
- (8) I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements.

Signature

Date

(Participant)

Appendix B:

Plain Language Statement

This letter invites you to participate in a Masters research project being undertaken by Claudine Lam and supervised by Dr Kylie Smith from the University of Melbourne.

The title of the project is: **Transition Learning and Development Statements: (mis)understandings and practices.**

This research will look broadly at transition and school readiness from the perspective of early childhood and primary school teachers. More specifically, it will focus on how the Transition Learning and Development Statement (DEECD, 2009) is used by early childhood and primary school teachers to facilitate a smoother transition for children and families and build a common, professional language between early childhood and primary school teachers. As the TLDS (DEECD, 2009) was only introduced in 2009, there is little research on how effective it is in achieving the intended goals. The aim of the research is to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of the TLDS (DEECD, 2009) with the intention of better understanding of how to provide diverse transition practices that will support all children, families and teachers to make transition as smooth and effective as possible.

The research will achieve these aims by collecting a range of data from early childhood and primary school teachers. Specifically, the project aims to:

- Increase knowledge about the skills and knowledge that early childhood and primary school educators see as significant in supporting children to make a smooth transition between early childhood and primary school contexts
- Increase knowledge about how transition practices support and promote smooth transition for children between early childhood and primary school contexts
- Provide knowledge about the effectiveness of using the TLDS (DEECD, 2009) to inform transition for children, families and early childhood and primary school teachers
- Provide knowledge about the effectiveness of using the TLDS (DEECD, 2009) to support and promote a common, professional language between early childhood and primary school educators
- Improve the transition experiences of children and families

We would like you to participate in this project in the following way:

- Participate in an interview of up to 60 minutes

This project has received clearance by The University of Melbourne's, Human Research Ethics Committee. To protect your privacy, responses and notes will be recorded in the form of coded categories, avoiding the need to use respondents' names and addresses. Participants have a choice to be named or referred to by pseudonym in any reports or publications arising from the study. However, it should be noted that as the number of people we seek to interview is quite small (ten participants), it is quite possible that someone may identify you. The data gathered by the project will be safely secured on-site at the University either within password protected computers or in locked filing cabinets in the researcher's University office. Confidentiality will be protected subject to any legal requirements.

Involvement in the project is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw consent at any time, and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied. There will be no effect to ongoing assessment, grades or management of participants in a dependent relationship with any researchers or contractors involved in this project.

All data will be destroyed after five years.

If you have any concerns arising from the conduct of this research project, please contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, the University of Melbourne, Victoria, 3101, Australia. Phone: 8344 2073, Fax: 9347 6883

Yours sincerely,

Claudine Lam

Melbourne Graduate School of Education

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Claudine Lam', is positioned below the printed name and affiliation.

Dr Kylie Smith,

Equity and Childhood Program, Youth Research Centre,
Melbourne Graduate School of Education

Appendix C:

Recruitment advertisement

Transition and Learning Development Statements: (mis)understandings and practices.

My name is Claudine Lam and I am studying for my Masters in Education at the University of Melbourne. My supervisor is Dr Kylie Smith.

I am undertaking research about the Transition and Learning Development Statement (TLDS) introduced by the Victorian Government in 2009. I am interested in exploring whether the TLDS meets the intended goals of;

- a. facilitating a smoother transition from early childhood to primary school contexts for children and families
- b. promoting and supporting a common professional language between early childhood and primary school teachers.

I am planning to interview five early childhood teachers and five primary school teachers who are currently working and have completed or engaged with the TLDS as a part of their practice.

What is this research for?

The purpose of this research is to measure and evaluate whether the TLDS is meeting the intended goals as outlined by the Victorian Government (DEECD, 2009). The data and subsequent findings will be used to inform how transition programs and practices can be adapted and diversified to be more successful and effective for children, families and educators.

Participant criteria for this research are:

- *Bachelor qualified teacher currently employed in an early childhood setting*
 - *have at least one year's experience with writing a TLDS*
- OR*
- *Bachelor qualified teacher currently employed as a prep grade teacher in a primary school setting*
 - *have at least one year's experience at reading, interpreting and using a TLDS*

What do you have to do?

If you are interested in taking part in this research project or would like to know more, please contact me and I will send you further information about the research or we can arrange a time and a place for an interview. Please note that the closing date for registering your Expression of Interest is Wednesday **31st October 2012**.

Email: cclam@student.unimelb.edu.au

Phone or text: 0437.985.604

Appendix D: Co-researcher interview questions

Interview Questions for Early Childhood participants

Preliminary interview questions	These questions will provide background information and the demographic data relevant to the research.
What is your age?	
What is your gender?	
What are your qualifications?	
How many years teaching experience do you have?	
What type of service do you currently work in? Briefly describe your service community.	

Interview questions
What is your understanding of school readiness and your role in supporting it?
What do you see as the purpose of transition and your role in supporting it?
What requisite skills and knowledge do you think children need to have to move successfully from an early childhood setting into a primary school setting?
What skills and knowledge do you want children to have within the learning outcome; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identity? b. Community? c. Well being? d. Learning? e. Communication?
What is your understanding of the purpose of the Transition Learning and Development Statements (TLDS)?
How and when do you use; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the TLDS? b. the child section? c. the parent section? d. the educator section?
How do you use the TLDS to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. reflect on the child? b. engage with the families? c. inform the transition program?
In your experience of using the TLDS
What have been the benefits of completing the TLDS with regards to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. sharing information about the child with primary school teachers? b. developing a professional relationship with primary school teachers?
What have been the challenges of completing the TLDS with regards to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. sharing information about the child with primary school teachers? b. developing a professional relationship with primary school teachers?

Interview Questions for Primary School participants

Preliminary interview questions	These questions will provide background information and the demographic data relevant to the research.
What is your age?	
What is your gender?	
What are your qualifications?	
How many years teaching experience do you have?	
What type of service do you currently work in?	
Briefly describe your service community.	

Interview questions
What is your understanding of school readiness and your role in supporting it?
What do you see as the purpose of transition and your role in supporting it?
What requisite skills and knowledge do you think children need to have to move successfully from an early childhood setting into a primary school setting?
What skills and knowledge do you want children to have within the learning outcome; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identity? b. Community? c. Well being? d. Learning? e. Communication?
What is your understanding of the purpose of the Transition Learning and Development Statements (TLDS)?
How and when do you use; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the TLDS? b. the child section? c. the parent section? d. the educator section?
How do you use the TLDS to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. reflect on the child? b. engage with the families? c. inform the transition program?
In your experience of using the TLDS <p>What have been the benefits of using TLDS for; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. facilitating a smooth transition? b. developing a professional relationship with early childhood teachers? </p> <p>What have been the challenges of using the TLDS for; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. facilitating a smooth transition? d. developing a professional relationship with early childhood teachers? </p>

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