Documenting children's learning in early childhood settings in Singapore – Parents' perspectives and teachers' reflections

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Statement of Originality

I certify that the research presented in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

The research presented in this thesis was approved by Macquarie University Ethics Committee (Human Research), reference number 5201800061 on 15th March 2018.

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List of Abbreviations

CCC	Child Care Centre
CPD	Continuing Professional Development Framework for EC Professionals
EC	Early Childhood
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECDA	Early Childhood Development Agency
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EYDF	Early Years Development Framework
LiLi schema	Local Interpretation of Larger Ideas schema
MOE	Ministry of Education
MSF	Ministry of Social & Family Development
NEL	Nurturing Early Learners - A curriculum framework for kindergartens in Singapore
RQ	Research Question
SMRT	Singapore Mass Rapid Transit
SPARK	SPARK: Singapore Preschool Accreditation Framework Quality Rating Scale

Glossary of Terms

Anchor Operator	Child care centre operators appointed by the Singapore government with at least 10 centres and providing 1,000+ preschool places.
Child Care Centres (CCC)	For children aged 18 months to 6 years offering full or half day program
Documentation	Any form of records of children's learning and development in the early childhood setting.
Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)	Includes kindergartens and child care centres for children 2 months to 6 years
Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA)	A Singapore government agency that serves as the regulatory and development authority for the early childhood sector Singapore
Early Childhood Settings	Government, private or religious infant care centres, child care centres and kindergartens.
English Language Teacher	Teachers who teach in the English language in early childhood. All curriculum areas are taught in English.
Infant Care Centres	For children aged 2 to 18 months offering a full or half day program
Kindergarten	For children aged 4 to 6 years, offering a three-to-four hour program
Ministry of Education (MOE)	A Singapore government department responsible for the provision and care of children attending kindergartens
Ministry of Social & Family Development (MSF)	A Singapore government department responsible for the development of families, social services and social safety nets.
Mother Tongue	The language that reflects the individual's ethnic culture i.e. Mandarin, Malay or Tamil
Mother Tongue Teacher	Teachers who teach Mandarin, Malay or Tamil language in early childhood. They are only responsible for teaching the mother tongue language and for documenting children's learning for that language only.
Parents	A child's mother, father and/or legal guardian.
Pedagogical Documentation	Educational documentation as described by the educators of Reggio Emilia. This is described in more detail on p.11-12

Preschool	Children aged 4 to 6 years attending a kindergarten or child care centre.
SPARK: Singapore Preschool Accreditation Framework Quality Rating Scale	A voluntary quality assurance framework that provides benchmarks to enhance teaching, learning administration and management processes for early childhood programs.
Teacher	An individual who works with children in a kindergarten or child care centre regardless of their qualifications
Training Agencies	Organisations that provide early childhood teacher training courses.

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Abstract

Documentation within early childhood settings involves the process of recording children's learning and development and the product presenting this information. It is a key component of early childhood pedagogy and teacher accountability, with parents viewed as the main audience. In Singapore, documentation is a requirement specified under the legislative policies included in the national Pre-school Accreditation Framework. There is however little to no research conducted in Singapore to inform and support policies and practices on documentation. This mixed methods study addresses this gap by utilising Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1995), with a focus on the child's mesosystem, the interconnectedness between the child's development, family and early childhood setting. An electronic survey was used to ascertain parents' perspectives on documentation of their child's learning. Analysis of this data was used in individual interviews to attain five teachers' responses to the parents' perspectives. Findings of this study affirmed that documentation varied in process and product across early childhood settings. Commonalities between parents' and teachers' perceptions on documentation existed, however, the perception of parent-teacher partnerships differed. The findings offer professional learning on documentation as a process and product for key stakeholders–children, parents and teachers–and the wider early childhood sector.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Scope and aims of the study

This study is aimed at exploring parents' perspectives on documentation in Early Childhood (EC) settings in Singapore. Although national policy implemented by EC settings in this country requires educators to prepare documentation to share with parents, to date, there has been no empirical research on EC documentation that captures parents' perspectives in Singapore. Parents are key stakeholders in the EC sector, and collaborating with parents is central to quality service provision (Hadley & Rouse, 2018; Lehrer, Lemay, & Bigras, 2015; MacNaughton & Hughes, 2011; Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2012; Waniganayake, Cheeseman, Fenech, Hadley, & Shepherd, 2017). Documentation is an integral part of EC pedagogy, as it is a means of making visible the work of the teacher within the classroom, evidencing a child's progress, learning and development, a form of communication with parents, and an important part of the teacher's planning process so as to ensure the curriculum is appropriate and meaningful for the children.

The literature on EC professionals documenting children's learning describes the presence of such pedagogical work as advocacy for the children and their learning capacities (Millikan & Giamminuti, 2014; Rinaldi, 2012). This documentation is also evidence of teachers' attempts to develop relationships with parents by sharing their child's learning and development in an educational setting (Birbili & Tzioga, 2014; Cooper, Hedges, & Dixon, 2014; MacDonald, 2007). Parents are also made aware that the contents of the documentation are assessed as a quality indicator of the EC setting's program (Early Childhood Development Agency, 2017b). The choices teachers make in their documentation also reflect the curriculum and pedagogical practices of the EC organisation, which contribute to the measurement of quality provision and the setting's accreditation status. There is global recognition that the presence of documentation of children's learning is a critical component in establishing professional relationships between EC professionals and parents (Murray, McFarland-Piazza, & Harrison, 2015; Reynolds & Duff, 2016; Rintakorpi, Lipponen, & Reunamo, 2014). However, to date, there is no evidence of documentation being used by parents as consumers of EC Education (ECE), nor for promoting authentic partnerships with parents that can improve learning outcomes for their children. The present study, though exploratory and small scale, makes a modest contribution in addressing

this gap. Findings from this research provide research-based evidence for a beginning an examination of the intersections between parents' perceptions of EC documentation and teachers' intentions when documenting children's learning in Singapore.

Documentation in EC has evolved in meaning and purpose over the last twenty years. Documentation can refer to records teachers create to report on children's learning and development. Such educational reports may include a variety of observation records such as anecdotal notes, running records, time samples, event samples, and analytical summaries (Arthur, Beecher, Death, Dockett, & Farmer, 2018). These can be considered products of documentation presenting formative and summative assessments focused on reporting on children's learnt knowledge and development. Taking the lead in posing important provocations to the EC sector when considering documentation, Rinaldi (2001) proposes a different intention for documentation, as embedded in the philosophy and principles of the educators from Reggio Emilia preschools, in Italy. Pedagogical documentation in these EC settings in Reggio Emilia is espoused as an act of active citizenship, where the process of documenting is focused on 'making visible children's learning' through in-depth investigations of their ideas and theories (Rinaldi, 2006, 2012). The process of working in this way is concerned with how documentation influences the work of teachers in developing the educational program and the engagement with families. This way of working has yet to be explored or formally introduced into the Singapore context.

Parents' understandings and perceptions of documentation are influenced by their lived experiences of interacting with EC settings and through the documentation they receive from their child's EC setting. Recent developments in curriculum initiatives in Singapore reflect focused attention on how documentation is recorded and used in assessing children's learning and development. This includes the introduction of the pedagogical tool, *Learning Stories*, which attempt to shift the way educators make children's learning visible by replacing the use of narrative accounts of single events/experiences with cumulative observation vignettes about children documented over time (Early Childhood Development Agency, 2015) . As a pedagogical tool, these documentations emphasise a focus on "a strengths-based credit model approach" (Early Childhood Development Agency, 2014, p. 7). The present study aims to contribute some insights on the effectiveness of this tool as well as other tools commonly used by teachers, particularly in terms of appraising parents' perspectives as key stakeholders, interested in documentation in EC settings as evidence of their children's learning.

Parents are a taken-for-granted and yet critical audience for documentation of children's learning (Arthur et al., 2018). Parents have beliefs and expectations on what they desire to know and understand through the documentation they receive from teachers (Lehrer et al., 2015). Accordingly, it is essential to explore and understand the impact parents' perspectives have on the phenomena of documentation used in EC settings. To date, available literature on documentation in the Singapore context indicate the absence of any local research that considers parents' perceptions on documentation, its intended use as a tool to inform parents of the learning and development of their child or as a means for promoting a deeper understanding of EC pedagogy. Pedagogical influences such as the work of the educators from Reggio Emilia (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 2012; Millikan & Giamminuti, 2014; Rinaldi, 2012), and the inclusion of documentation as a means of measuring quality in the legislative policies within the SPARK: Singapore Pre-school Accreditation Framework (Early Childhood Development Agency, 2017b), both indicate that documentation is more than just about keeping records about children and plays a role in determining the quality of the EC setting.

Therefore, the present study was framed within the perspectives of parents, as key stakeholders, on EC documentation, and aims to answer three main research questions (RQs):

RQ1. What are parents' perspectives on documentation of their children's learning in EC settings in Singapore?

RQ2. What are teachers' reactions to parents' perspectives on documentation?

RQ3. What are the implications of these perspectives for EC teachers in their documentation practice?

Data was collected through an online survey with parents and a one-to-one interview with teachers. The findings from this study shed light on parents' perspectives, which included their beliefs and values regarding the documentation they received from the EC settings that their children attend. With insight into these perspectives, teachers were able to reflect on their own experiences with parents with regard to the documentation they provided as well as the values behind their own engagement with documentation.

1.2. Organisation of the thesis

This thesis comprises five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an orientation to the research by explaining its aims and establishing the justification for the research being conducted in Singapore. Chapter 2 looks at various studies on documentation, and examines the definitions of

documentation and its significance within ECE. It will also discuss previous research on documentation and parents' perspectives. Chapter 3 describes the methodology and design of this study. It includes a discussion of the ethical considerations, design aspects, data collection phases and measures, and recruitment of participants and their demographic characteristics. Key findings and data as collated and analysed are presented in Chapter 4. To conclude, in Chapter 5, the discussion will consider key implications for practice and policy in EC settings in Singapore as well as future research possibilities.

1.3. EC sector in Singapore

Singapore is a small island nation comprising four main ethnic cultural groups: Chinese, Malay, Indian, and other ethnic groups. Compulsory education begins when children turn seven years old. EC settings in the country comprise of infant care centres, child care centres, and kindergartens. These cater for children from two months up to and including the age of six years. As of Q1 2019, Singapore had 1515 child care centres catering for children from 18 months to six years and 495 kindergartens which cater for children age four to six years (Early Childhood Development Agency, 2017a) Both infant care centres and child care centres typically offer a full or half-day program, whilst kindergartens offer a three- to four-hour program. These EC settings comprised of public and private sector ownership and offer services based on family needs, proximity, program type and affordability.

The EC programs in the country reflect the cultural groups, where curriculum is taught in both the English language and mother-tongue languages of Mandarin, Malay and Tamil. The English language is the lingua franca of the nation, and all EC programs and curriculum are delivered in the English language. While the term mother-tongue generally refers to first language internationally, in the Singapore context, it refers to the home languages of the respective cultural groups. The mother tongue is considered a curriculum area that is taught independently in the EC program. All EC settings employ EC teachers who can teach the full EC curriculum in English, as well as EC teachers who speak either Mandarin, Tamil and Malay to teach children in their particular mother tongue. Introduced in 1966, Singapore's bilingual education policy applies to all education levels (Gopinathan, 1979). Both English and mother-tongue EC teachers are responsible for recording documentation reflecting children's learning and development in the respective languages. A collation of documentation prepared by both

teaching teams is commonly presented during parent-teacher conferences, which are typically conducted by the English language teachers.

In 2013, the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA), an autonomous organisation, was established (ECDA, 2017, October 02). The ECDA is jointly overseen by the Singapore Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF). Prior to this, the formulation and implementation of education policies and their development for kindergartens was overseen by the MOE, and for infant care and child care centres by the MSF. Since its establishment, the ECDA is responsible for the regulation, quality assessment and the provision of professional development resources to support EC professionals across all service types. These responsibilities reflect the agency's focus on raising the quality of EC programs across the country.

With the introduction of SPARK, mentioned in Section 1.1, parent involvement has become more visible, with EC settings emphasising efforts to involve parents to demonstrate evidence of satisfying criteria for parent involvement (ECDA, 2017b). The children's daily pick-up and drop-off at the setting may not necessarily involve parents due to the involvement of grandparents or other family members or a domestic helper. Parent-teacher conferences are commonly held two to four times a year and are typically attended by either or both parents. The English Language and Mother Tongue teachers will conduct these conferences to report on children's learning and development, and documentation is a key component of these discussions. As indicated in Singapore's Preschool Accreditation Framework criterion 6.1, "In addition to daily conversations, emails, telephone calls or communication books, centres are expected to have at least two parent-teacher conferences per year" (ECDA, 2017b, p.60).

1.3.1. National policy documents

There are four key national policy documents that EC settings in Singapore use as guides in meeting the regulatory and accreditation requirements, discussed as follows.

- *Early Years Development Framework (EYDF)*. This was developed and published by the ECDA in 2013. The aim of this publication is to propose some broad principles and practices that signify quality service provision in EC settings. This is a reference document for educators and leaders working in EC centres as they plan and evaluate their curriculum and practices for

children aged two months to three years. The EYDF provides centres the desired outcomes as a framework for quality using five guiding principles: the developing child; the intentional program; the professional educarer; the involved family; and the engaged community (ECDA, 2013). The EYDF is not mandatory but is a recommended framework for centres striving to provide quality centre-based care to children.

- *Nurturing Early Learners (NEL) – A curriculum framework for kindergartens in Singapore*. The NEL framework is a voluntary curriculum document focused on guiding the development of the kindergarten program for children aged four to six years. The second edition of the NEL was published by the MOE in 2012 (MOE, 2012). The framework details the learning goals for children to achieve by the time they conclude their kindergarten education. It is part of the kindergarten curriculum which the Ministry has developed in conjunction with the NEL educators' guide. The NEL Framework for mother-tongue languages was published the following year (MOE, 2013).

- *SPARK: Singapore Preschool Accreditation Framework*. The SPARK was developed and implemented in 2011 and was later reviewed and updated in 2015 and again in 2017. This framework is built upon five core values: "a focus on the child, leadership with vision, professionalism with impact, innovation with purpose and partnership for growth" (p. 7). The notion of partnership in this framework refers to collaboration with parents through centre organised events, parent-teacher conferences and take-home activities.

- *Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Framework for EC Professionals.* The CPD framework describes documenting children's learning as a sub-area in the knowledge domain of "Learning Environments and Curriculum" (MSF, 2012, p.34). It describes the activities that the EC professional must engage in to enhance their knowledge and skills in this area. The publication, Learning stories - Making visible children's learning and development was introduced in 2014.

1.4. Significance of the study

There has been a shift in the care arrangements for children in Singapore in recent years. Children who used to be cared for at home by a parent, grandparent(s) or a domestic helper are now increasingly placed in an EC setting (Prime Minister's Office Singapore, 2017, August 20).

Singaporean parents in this new era are also more well informed and selective in their choice of EC settings for their children. Enrolment into an EC setting is not compulsory in Singapore. Recognising the possible benefits of placing their children in an EC setting, parents are choosing to do so even though (Tan, 2017). Being well informed and selective also comes with a set of expectations, as parents commit financially, physically and mentally to their child's experience in the EC setting. Documentation is one of the many avenues through which parents are able to gauge the outcomes of their decision to place their children in the EC setting of their choice.

Parents' perspectives and teachers' reflections emerging from this study provided insights about documentation on children's learning in EC settings in Singapore. As key stakeholders in the EC sector, new knowledge garnered from exploring these parents' and teachers' perspectives is of importance in advancing EC policy and practice in this country. It is anticipated that insights gained from this study will contribute to enhancing children's learning outcomes through improved teaching practices, and may assist in promoting change in the policy and practices of documentation within EC programs in Singapore. The key findings will also assist EC teachers to better understand the purpose, intention and nature of documenting children's learning. It will enhance their daily practices when engaging in the documentation process as well as re-evaluating why and how they are communicating these aspects of documentation to parents.

1.5. Chapter Summary

This chapter frames this study through an introduction to the Singapore EC context; the teachers, the parents and the various EC settings available to families. In gaining contextual understandings of documentation within the EC settings, the key national frameworks that mention documentation in particular were discussed. These form the contextual backdrop to this study and highlighted the need to consider the various stakeholders who have an influence on both the process and product of documentation within the EC setting. The following chapter will present a review of literature of previous research on documentation and the interactions between documentation and the key stakeholders in the EC setting.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature presented in this chapter was sourced from multiple database searches through the Macquarie University library database and Google Scholar. The searches were limited to the last decade (2009-2019), as it is crucial to consider the most current thinking and research around the area of EC documentation. The papers were all published in English. Keywords used were: Early Childhood, documentation, pedagogical documentation, observation, portfolio, assessment, parents, parent partnership, families, parent involvement, family involvement, parent perspective, mothers, fathers, accountability, quality, Early Childhood teacher, teaching practice, preschool and preschool teachers were used in the searches. This review aims to synthesize the key ideas and thinking on documentation in contemporary writings on Early Childhood Education.

2.1. Locating the research gap

Documentation by EC teachers is seen to be a significant component of quality assessment in most Italian EC systems of evaluation (Picchio, Di Giandomenico, & Musatti, 2014; Picchio, Giovannini, Mayer, & Musatti, 2012). Systemic documentation as described by the educators in Reggio Emilia in Italy is considered a participatory process, found in high-quality centres. It is focused beyond presenting an account of children's knowledge and competencies, to expressing evaluations and/or judgements about children's development and learning. Documentation may contain perspectives on children's learning as expressed by children themselves as well as teachers (Forman & Fyfe, 2012; Rinaldi, 2006) and to a lesser extent, parents. Documentation has also been considered as a process and a product that enables teachers to make learning visible (Clemens, Gleim, & Handler, 2012; Rinaldi, 2001, 2013). These publications such as Clemens et al. (2012), Ebbeck and Chan (2011), Fleet, Patterson and Robertson (2006, 2012, 2017b), Millikan and Giamminuti (2014) and Moran, Desrochers, and Cavicchi (2007) also reflect the influence of the principles and practices of documentation practiced by the educators of Reggio Emilia preschool in Italy have had a significant global impact on the EC sector. Publications by researchers such as Kocher (2008), Paananen and Lipponen (2018), Rintakorpi (2016), Schroeder-Yu (2008), Sparrman and Lindgren (2010) and Turner and Wilson (2009) also illustrate

the continuing nature of studying the impact, influence and integration of the processes for making children's learning visible through what is known as pedagogical documentation.

A database search of peer-reviewed journal articles reporting on research conducted using the above keywords in EC settings in Singapore over the last decade in the EBSCO academic premier database, generated 80 articles, with some focusing on health and medical sciences (n=12). Of these, six articles reflected research on parents' perspectives in the following areas: language and literacy (n=2), access to technology (n=2), quality care for infant/toddlers (n=1), teacher professionalism (n=1), and school readiness and skills (n=2). Although half of these articles (n=40) referred to curriculum, leadership and child development, only one paper mentioned pedagogical documentation (Ebbeck & Chan, 2011) while another paper referred to web documentation for teaching (Lim & Hoo, 2012). Firstly, Ebbeck and Chan (2011) proposed the adoption of pedagogical documentation as a means of raising the standards of preschool education in Singapore. Secondly, Lim and Hoo (2012) explored the use of web-based documentation as a method to support, reflect and challenge teachers' beliefs, teaching approaches and strategies and 'best practice'. Despite the mention of 'documentation' in these two journal articles, neither addressed the phenomena of documentation within the EC sector in Singapore or related threads of thinking and research on this topic in Singapore. Overall, there were no publications based on research conducted in Singapore focussing on parents' perspectives on documentation in local EC settings.

2.2. Definitions of documentation in Early Childhood settings

When considering educational documentation in ECE, it is important to understand this phenomenon through the analysis, in terms of the purpose of documentation. The analysis of studies published in English during the past decade (2009- 2019) indicates that documentation in EC settings can be considered in at least two ways: *Documentation as a product* and *Documentation as a process.*

2.2.1. Documentation as a product

The notion of documentation in EC settings is usually concerned with any kind of visual record that includes narratives about an individual child or two or more children. Being clear about what a piece of documentation is attempting to communicate is important; and this is dependent on

the skills and abilities of the author to communicate these clearly to the respective audience (McFadden & Thomas, 2016; Seitz & Bartholomew, 2008). Documentation is a physical record used by EC teachers to indicate a child's learning and development. It can also be a record of compliance expected of EC settings under national policy requirements. Scholars have however, frequently noted that documentation is subjective, depending on the author and the intended audience (Alvestad & Sheridan, 2015; Emilson & Pramling Samuelsson, 2014; Fleet et al., 2006, 2012, 2017b; Robertson, 2006). The subjectivity of documentation creates a space for ambiguity in relation to its purpose as a product (physical records) in the EC sector, and to its place in the lives of children, families and teachers.

Documentation comes in various forms, and is influenced by the individual setting's teaching philosophy and pedagogy and the individual EC teacher's approach to documentation (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, 2011; Chng, 2015). There are different types of documentation: they can be as simple as a handwritten jotting of an observation, or a transcription of a recorded conversation between two children or formally constructed developmental summary about a child's growth and acquisition of skills and understandings over two to three weeks (Arthur, Beecher, Death, Dockett, & Farmer, 2015). Child portfolios and annual summative records document normative understandings of children, and what and how they are and should be learning, usually assessed against developmental milestones (Forman, 2009; Hooker, 2017; Seitz & Bartholomew, 2008). Such documentation is generally presented as individual records that serve as supporting evidence for discussing children's development when educators meet with families and may also be used to categorise children's development within a normal or at-risk range. It is also proof or evidence that the centre is doing their job, by observing, documenting, reflecting and thereby keeping track of children's developmental changes and planning programs that are appropriate in reaching their full potential.

The products of documentation also vary, because the documentation might simply be a collection of work samples and/or photographs or a video of children at play. The plethora of documentation products include the different recording techniques such as checklists, anecdotal records, running records, event samples, time samples, language transcripts, analytical summaries, sociograms and learning stories (Arthur et al., 2018). These documentation products may be recorded daily, weekly, monthly, termly, biannually or annually. The frequency of such recordings is dependent on the context of the EC setting and the purpose of these records for meeting context-specific program philosophies and/or regulatory requirements. Some EC

settings also engage in publishing digital documentations such as blogs and newsletters by using a specific digital platform/portal (Arthur et al., 2018; Lindgren, 2012). The use of digital tools in the last decade has enabled teachers' opportunities to capture children's engagement visually in the learning moment. These tools have also extended possibilities for children to participate and contribute both to the processes and products of documentation (Lindgren, 2012; Marshall et al., 2009; Merewether, 2018). The presence, representations, visibility and digital footprint of children in digital documentation need to be considered alongside ethical issues involved in sharing these products with the children as well their family and/or non-family (Lindgren, 2012; Williams, Sheridan, & Sandberg, 2014).

The purpose of these documentation products has shifted and evolved over time, to move beyond just recording and reporting on children's development and achievements. The evolution of the documentation phenomenon has shifted its focus from the products of documentation to the processes by which documentation is created. The process itself also gives meaning to its purpose and intent.

2.2.2. Documentation as a process

According to the educators of the Reggio Emilia preschools, documentation is a democratic process is exemplified by the 'Pedagogy of Listening' (Rinaldi, 2012; Schroeder-Yu, 2008; Turner & Wilson, 2009), which reflects an active and dynamic form of listening. When educators consider assessment *as* learning, the child is a part of the process of assessment, and educators share the documentation with the child to elicit their perspectives on the learning that has been evaluated. This is closely related to assessment for learning as a process used by educators to support and enhance learning, as they recognise children's learning through the documentation (Emilson & Pramling Samuelsson, 2014; Millikan & Giamminuti, 2014).

The process of documentation as perceived by Reggio Emilia educators of is focused primarily on making children's learning visible for learning and teaching (Rinaldi, 2001). The premise of the work they do is dedicated to the ongoing search for meaning: to understand the provocations that ignite thinking in children, and as a reflection of their emerging ideas and theories (Edwards et al., 2012; Rinaldi, 2006). Such a premise shifts away from a view of documentation as assessment; rather, it embeds the process of documentation as research – research with children, and teachers as researchers for their own learning (Fyfe, 2012; Rinaldi,

2001). Documentation, when enacted as such, shifts the teacher's approach to learning and teaching and is perceived as a commitment to continuous professional development, as the process is not an individual one but one of engagement in a learning community with others.

One of the core principles of pedagogical documentation is to make children's learning explicit, visible and assessable, through the 'Pedagogy of Listening' (Millikan & Giamminuti, 2014; Rinaldi, 2006, 2012). This process involves teachers focusing on children's thinking and explicitly works to explore children's learning processes. The process of documenting serves as a learning and researching space for both teachers and children, instead of photographs as a retrospective act of recording past interactions and actions or simply a record of an observation or a conversation with a child (Clemens et al., 2012; Millikan & Giamminuti, 2014).

In considering documentation as a process, the diversity of methods by which teachers use to collect data about children and their learning is important to consider. Documentation can be used as a form of assessment and evaluation, or to facilitate the process of assessment and evaluation with EC teachers, children and their parents (Birbili & Tzioga, 2014; MacDonald, 2007). Overall, documentation can provide the impetus for professional dialogue within an EC setting as well as across the sector. To date, the place of documentation in the daily discourse of centre-based planning and evaluation of children's learning, and in the centre's program and approach to its pedagogy have not been adequately researched through large scale longitudinal research.

2.3. Purposes of documentation

The definition of documentation underpins the purposes of documentation. Documentation as process and/or process influence individual EC settings' stand, position and the nature or type of documentation within their centres. The reasons for using documentation in EC settings is highly variable. Based on the literature reviewed for this thesis, there are at least five ways of explaining the purpose of documentation:

2.3.1. Documentation for communication and participation

As the main audience for documentation in EC settings is parents, there are more studies that have focused on how documentation influences teacher-parent communication and is used as a means of getting families involved in the EC setting (Buldu, 2010; Murray et al., 2015; Reynolds

& Duff, 2016; Rintakorpi et al., 2014). Communication about documentation encourages parents to contribute their own documentations of their children, adding further insights to the teachers' perspectives. Studies have shown parents' willingness to contribute to teachers' documentation of their children's learning (Birbili & Tzioga, 2014; Cooper et al., 2014; Reynolds & Duff, 2016). Rouse (2016), however, notes that in her study there was a discrepancy between what teachers thought they were communicating through their documentation and how it was perceived by parents. Therefore, it is important for teachers to consider the audience when documenting, in order to ensure it is relevant and meaningful and can be understood by those being targeted. Despite this awareness emerging through available research, and families are viewed as one of the key stakeholders, there is a lack of research that considers parents' perspectives on EC documentation (Buldu, 2010).

2.3.2. Documentation for research and professional development

The role of teachers is also an area of focus for researchers interested in children's learning, as the documentation of children's learning by the teacher is viewed as a means for professional development (Rintakorpi, 2016). This discussion is also linked with professionalism in the EC sector (Löfdahl, 2014; Löfgren, 2015, 2016, 2017; Picchio et al., 2012). Research considering the links between EC teacher professionalism and documentation describes the emphasis teachers place on documentation as a means of showcasing and exemplifying their professional capacities and competencies when engaging with parents on quality assessment (Löfdahl, 2014; Löfgren, 2015). For instance, Löfgren (2016) conceptualises the language of documentation as institutional narratives commonly found in policy documents of the country such as the national curriculum and national policy translations. EC teachers refer to compliance requirements to demonstrate their ability to meet outcomes intended by these national policies. Rintakorpi (2016, p. 401) for example, considers the use of such institutional narratives as "social and political consequences" of documenting. However, Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence (2007, p. 154) assert that documentation narratives can "never be neutral, innocent or objective".

Singapore's *Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Framework for EC Professionals* describes documenting children's learning as a sub-area in the knowledge domain of "Learning Environments and Curriculum" (MSF, 2012, p.34). A 7-hour professional development workshop is available to senior EC teachers to support them in developing the child holistically and building professional capacity in writing learning stories (ECDA, 2017). This workshop is not compulsory;

and there is no published data on the take-up rate nor evaluation of participants' feedback on its usefulness or impact.

2.3.3. Documentation for assessment

Studies by Basford and Bath (2014), Emilson and Pramling Samuelsson (2014), Knauf (2015) and Seitz and Bartholomew (2008) conclude that documentation is often used as a means of assessing children's development and learning. Assessing children's learning can be considered a process where educators engage in the collection and collation of information about children. The analysis of this information provides evidence on what children understand, are able to do and would like to know and learn more about (Australian Government Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009; Early Childhood Development Agency, 2015; Fleet & Patterson, 2011; Giudici, Rinaldi, & Krechevsky, 2001; Millikan & Giamminuti, 2014). Barnes (2012) proposes considering assessment in three ways: "assessment *of* learning, assessment *for* learning, and assessment *as* learning" (p.7). Documenting assessment *of* learning usually occurs after the child has engaged in a particular experience, either immediately at the conclusion of the singular experience or over a period of time.

This type of assessment is concerned with the attainment of a predetermined set of goals, measures or descriptors to evidence developmental and/or curriculum outcomes (Basford & Bath, 2014; Ebbeck, Teo, Tan, & Goh, 2014; Lim, Rodger, & Brown, 2010). Documenting assessment *for* learning positions the purpose of documentation differently: this type of assessment is concerned with identifying the child's current knowledge, thinking, skills and understanding in order for the educators to build on, extend and enhance the child's learning. This form of documentation is considered as formative assessment and is ongoing and frequent in the context of the particular experience and investigation. This form of documentation is not concerned with making a comparison of the child's learning with a development norm or curriculum outcome (Havnes, Smith, Dysthe, & Ludvigsen, 2012; Hooker, 2017; MacDonald, 2007). This form of assessment is mostly referred to as making learning visible through documentation, and is characteristic of the work of the educators of Reggio Emilia (Giudici et al., 2001; Rinaldi, 2001).

In Singapore, the *Good Practices Handbook for Child Care Centre* (MSF, 2003) guide, published over ten years ago, is still available and accessed by teachers through the ECDA

website. It documents children's learning through portfolios which include organising collections of a child's work to record their progress through the year, and reflecting the perspectives of the child, their parents and the teachers. This collection can include samples of work the child has completed, as well as reflections by teachers and parents about the children's growth and development as well as learning at the EC setting. In Singapore, since 2015, documentation for the purposes of assessing children's learning and development has extended to *Learning Stories*, a narrative approach to naturalistic observations of the child which is collected over time and which can include the home setting (ECDA, 2015; Teo-Zuzarte & Tan, 2014). A YouTube video was published by ECDA (2016, March 13) to promote the focus of learning stories as a pedagogical tool in EC settings. There is no national policy on the use of learning stories, and the choice of tools used for documentation is open and decided by centres. Importantly, to date, there has been no evaluation of the impact or effectiveness of the *Learning Stories* tool, which was made available to teachers nationally in April 2015 and adopted on a voluntary basis by centres.

Similarly, in Australia, *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework* (Australian Government Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009), the national learning framework for children, considers assessment as an ongoing process which involves a multitude of methods to collect and document information about children in order to assess their learning. This framework emphasises the importance of teachers determining "appropriate ways to collect rich and meaningful information that depicts children's learning in context, describes their progress and identifies their strengths, skills and understandings" (p.17). However, there has also been no national study in Australia to assess the impact of documentation in EC settings through rigorous longitudinal research, which is necessary when examining change over time.

2.3.4. Documentation for learning, teaching and relationships

The educators in Reggio Emilia uses documentation not as a product but rather a means for inquiry about children's thinking as well as the teacher's teaching (Forman & Fyfe, 2012). Fleet (2017) proposes a schema, *Local Interpretation of Larger Ideas* (**LiL**i schema), with which to examine the 'decision-making frames' when teachers engage in pedagogical documentation. These frames can, in turn, inform or hinder the teachers' practice. This schema builds upon how documentation is used and defined in Reggio Emilia preschools and pushes the notion that

documentation can and should impact the teachers' approach and focus in their teaching within their classrooms. This notion looks at documentation as part of a teacher's planning cycle rather than as an end product. Documentation, when approached in this manner, should also include various voices within the decision making, and is used as "a tool for helping teachers and children reflect on prior experience" (Fyfe, 2012, p. 280). When documentation is upheld as a process for reflection, this shifts teachers away from the trap in which documentation becomes "strategies to predict and control children more effectively through processes of normalization and surveillance" (Dahlberg, 2012, p. 229).

2.3.5. Documentation for quality assessment

In recent years, EC scholars have been interested in conducting research on documentation for various purposes. In studies conducted by Picchio et al. (2014) and Picchio et al. (2012), documentation has been viewed as a means of identifying quality in EC programs. These researchers assert that documentation may reflect certain elements of quality in EC programs and environments. Such quality measures can also be evaluated from within national EC frameworks in various countries such as in Australia, New Zealand and Singapore.

In Australia, documentation about the child's program and learning is assessed as part of Element 1.1.4 of Standard 1.1 of the *National Quality Standard* (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, 2018 February). As stated in the aim of this element, "one of the goals of high-quality education and care services is to engage with families about the learning and development of their child" (p.30). Assessment of this aim is also linked to the expectation of the information exchange about the children between educators and families, as required by the *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework* (Australian Government Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009). The intent of documentation in developing partnerships with families is a principle of this framework.

Similarly, in Singapore, documentation is part of criteria six, "Pedagogy", in the SPARK (ECDA, 2017b). It is embedded within the element, "Assessment of Children's Learning and Development", which is concerned with "Observing and documenting children's learning and development" and "Communicating children's learning and development to parents" (ECDA, 2017b, p.51). It further explains what is expected ensuring there is a variety of approaches used when documenting, there is a documenting system in place, how it impacts on future teaching,

providing families a summary and using the documentation to engage parents (ECDA, 2017b). Since its introduction in 2010, there has been no publicly accessible information or research on the impact or effectiveness of the SPARK quality rating scale. However, in SPARK it is clear that documentation and the stakeholders (teacher and parents) are considered as contributing to the quality measurement of an EC setting.

Likewise, in New Zealand, *Learning Stories* is a documentation method used in assessing children's learning developed by Margaret Carr (2001). This approach aligns with the aspirations of the *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education New Zealand, 2017), the country's mandated EC curriculum. In this country, documentation is viewed as a non-traditional form of assessment where there are no 'tests' or 'exams'. Instead, children's learning is appraised through "written narratives of significant learning moments, highlighting children's strengths, interests, abilities and dispositions" (Niles, 2015, p. 6). While it is not the only method used in assessing children's learning, narrative assessment is considered to be an effective assessment practice evidencing high quality education and care in the context of New Zealand's EC curriculum (Arndt & Tesar, 2015; Cooper et al., 2014; Education Review Office, 2018 November).

2.4. Complexities of documentation

Overall, the analysis of the literature has supported considerations of documentation as product and as process. It is however, not always possible to separate documentation as process from, documentation as a product, as these can overlap; and in this sense, documentation is capable of changing form and nature, over time and in different contexts. Accordingly, documentation may be perceived as a "research report used to enhance discourse rather than a mere record of a past event" (Forman & Fyfe, 2012, p. 254).

When taken together, documentation can be seen as a forum where the cultures of childhood and of education are participatory, or it is a means of being part of a democratic discourse or practice (Edwards et al., 2012). The study of the discourse of documentation is a complex one. This includes describing various aspects of what documentation entails, its impact and the role it plays within EC settings, as well as how it is seen as a means of understanding children better and making their learning visible (Millikan & Giamminuti, 2014; Rouse, 2016). Moreover, Fleet, Patterson, and Robertson (2017a) suggest that there is a differentiation between "reporting (for example, for an audit) and recording (documenting events) and

pedagogical documentation, which is a principle driving curriculum and pedagogy in concert with colleagues and children" (p.3), as all three of these are often categorized loosely as documentation. This forms the basis on which to consider and differentiate documentation based on the content they carry. For example, documentation concerning a future school event will be considered 'reporting', whole class activities 'recording', and the child's responses and how these influence planning as 'pedagogical documentation'.

Discussions about the nature of documentation are confusing, and therefore it is necessary to indicate what is considered not appropriate to include in the definition of documentation presented in this thesis. Documentation in EC settings is more than:

- an observation record, checklist or collection of work samples showcasing a child's development, learning and achievements at a particular point in time and context;
- a display of work samples or 'finished' work by a child or a group of children that, when considered closely, may be a collection of work of children that is similar, replicated or the same;
- 'proof' or evidence of what a child can and cannot do;
- a description or record of the day's schedule or narrative account of events in a child's room or the EC setting.

Describing documentation strictly within these narrow interpretations indicated above, is limiting and inhibit the potential value of documentation in exploring children's learning and development in EC settings. These notions of documentation undermine the broader intentions and purpose of EC documentation, and should be reconsidered by exploring the rich possibilities offered through democratic ways of working with children and families (Birbili & Tzioga, 2014; McFadden & Thomas, 2016; Murray et al., 2015; Rintakorpi et al., 2014; Rouse, 2016), and authentic development of a research-based approach to teaching (Alvestad & Sheridan, 2015; Havnes et al., 2012; Kalliala & Pramling Samuelsson, 2014; Karlsdóttir & Garðarsdóttir, 2010; Löfgren, 2015, 2017; Newman & Leggett, 2019; Picchio et al., 2012; Rintakorpi, 2016). The influence of the Reggio Emilia educational project and their conceptualisations of pedagogical documentation have elicited deeper conversations about the purpose and significance of documentation in EC settings. The diversity of purposes and complexity that documentation bring forms the backdrop of the responses of parents and teachers of this study as there is yet to be a common and consistent understanding of documentation in the Singapore context.

2.5. Ethical considerations

The documentation phenomenon in EC settings globally can be considered in a number of ways. According to Emilson and Pramling Samuelsson (2014), consciously or unconsciously, when teachers document, children may become objects of study. In the effort of making children's learning visible, visuals of children are used to capture them in place and time within the context of the investigation or the nature of the learning that is being highlighted. Visual documentation as a conduit for making children's learning and voice heard is focused on representing the child (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999; Lindgren, 2012). It can be argued that, in such visual representations, children are depicted as capable and competent, which may in essence exclude other ways of being. Sparrman and Lindgren (2010) highlight that, when the documentation focus on children, they become objects of study, which reflects a surveillance approach to children by the teachers. This is particularly so when visuals used in documentation are primarily of children and where these captured moments may not reflect children as agents but rather in positions where they have been surveilled. Such an approach raises ethical issues about the purpose, intent and focus on the act of documenting (Elfström Pettersson, 2014; Emilson & Pramling Samuelsson, 2014; Lindgren, 2012; Newman, 2000). Sparrman and Lindgren (2010) are concerned that visual documentation creates for children,

> … a childhood in which being looked at, and wanting to be looked at, is a good childhood, and where good children do not resist being looked at. This means that everyday monitoring, evaluation, and surveillance are becoming part of what it means to be a child in a preschool setting, and that children must get used to being under scrutiny and surveillance. (p.259)

2.6. Rationale for the study

In Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1995), he highlighted the importance of a child's various contexts such as the family, the EC setting and the community playing a part in influencing and impacting the growth, development and learning of a child. Hence, when considering the various practices within the EC setting, it is essential to remember not to look at the child, the family or the EC setting in isolation, rather to examine the places in

which they intertwine and interact. When considering the documentation that teachers within EC settings prepare, children and parents are the key stakeholders they are addressing.

On the basis of the findings of this literature review, the present study is situated within social-constructivist approaches to ECE, based on scholarship of those such as in Fleer et al. (2006), McLachlan, Fleer, and Edwards (2010) and Rogoff (1995). In part, this approach acknowledges the co-construction of teaching and learning that is relevant in recognising the benefits of documentation when shared between parents, teachers and children, the primary stakeholders. Fleer, Anning, and Cullen (2004) conceptualise the social construction of ECE as a means of building communities of practice through strengthening and understanding practice in ECE. This social construction can be theorised through what Rogoff (1995) considers to be a socio-cultural activity plane involving guided participation. Such an approach to the present study supports the identification of what is valued by the primary stakeholders in the intentions and purposes of EC documentation. Rogoff (1995) argues that the intentional participation by parents and/or teachers and/or children in EC documentation fosters learning about the phenomenon.

In realising children's full potential through ECE, working with parents is also recognised world-wide as an essential component of teachers' everyday work (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2012). In countries such as Singapore and Australia, developing partnerships with parents has been incorporated as a centrepiece of national policy (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, 2018 February; Manzon, Miller, Hong, & Khong, 2015). However, as noted in the discussion in Chapter 5, there are tensions between policy expectations and the realities of practice in EC settings.

Based on their analysis of relevant literature published in English language publications, Livingstone and Hydon (2019, p. 6) suggest that "the definitions of pedagogical documentation lies in a continuum from the practical to the profound." For the purpose of this thesis, these two end points of the documentation continuum are described simply as 'practicalities' and 'possibilities'. As indicated in Figure 2.1, the 'practicalities', placed at one end of the continuum elements contains a definition that describe the "mechanics of the process" in preparing and implementing documentation in daily practice. At the other end, they locate the 'possibilities' or "the more nuanced and evolving definitions that speak to the 'big ideas' in education, suggesting possibility and potentiality rather than a fixed way of knowing or articulating" (p.6). This

conceptualisation of documentation in EC settings was explored further in the analysis and discussion of the findings of this study.

Figure 2.1. Documentation as a continuum

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The present study's methodology was designed to ascertain parents' perspectives about the value of documentation of children's development and learning that takes place within EC settings in Singapore. Recent developments in curriculum initiatives in Singapore reflect focused attention on how documentation is to be recorded and used in assessing children's learning and development. In analysing the findings of this study, the 'practicalities' and 'possibilities' of documentation as perceived by parents were will be explored. In turn, teachers' reflections on these findings were analysed in exploring the place of documentation in EC settings in Singapore.

2.6. Chapter Summary

The literature reviewed examined the importance of both the EC teacher and the parents within the construct of EC documentation. The multiple definitions of documentation have been discussed, shedding light on the diversity in the practices of documentation within the EC sector, with specific reference to policy and practice in Singapore as appropriate. This chapter also provided the theoretical underpinnings for this study, which form the basis upon which the methodology is situated, and as described in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Approach to the study

This research is comprised of two phases and was of a mixed methods design. That is, both qualitative and quantitative data collection tools and analysis methods were engaged to ascertain rich in-depth data, to enable a broad scoping of pedagogical documentation in EC settings in Singapore. The primary focus was to capture parents' perspectives on their experience of the documentation they have received from EC settings. Teachers' perspectives on parent engagement enhanced this examination and contributed to the validity of the study. Using a mixed method approach enhanced the scope and depth of the research. To reduce the reliance on a single data collection strategy, both parent surveys and teacher interviews were purposefully used to collect data from two key stakeholders with differing perceptions, knowledge and experiences of a complex phenomenon such as EC documentation.

In trying to understand the relationship between a child's family and the EC setting, a social ecological lens can be adopted (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory places significance on the inter-relationships between the various contexts that impact the child's learning and development. In the Microsystem, the child's family and the EC setting the child attends are the most immediate contexts (Berk, 2012; White, Hayes, & Livesey, 2013). It is therefore important to consider these two contexts together and the inter-relationship and continuity between them. Gaining a better understanding of how parents perceive documentation will shed light on the extent of the inter-relationships between the EC setting, the home and, ultimately, the child.

The present study adopted a combination of qualitative and quantitative strategies to create "an overall design that is complementary in strengths and non-overlapping in weaknesses" (Johnson & Christenson, 2008, p. 433). The qualitative data yielded from the interview phase of the study contributed to the affirmation of the themes developed from the analysis of the quantitative data yielded from the surveys. The survey (quantitative component) was intentionally used to generate questions for the interviews (qualitative component). In this way, each phase of the study was intended to provide a differing perspective in understanding the EC documentation phenomenon. By integrating quantitative and qualitative data, it was also

possible to achieve a more holistic understanding on the EC documentation phenomenon (Morgan, 2014; Torrance, 2012).

3.2. Participants

The study aimed to recruit a mix of parents reflecting Singapore's multi-racial society made up of four main ethnic groups; 76% Chinese, 15% Malays, 7.4% Indians and 1.5% other ethnicities (based on the 2018 statistics). Parents were also informed that either the mother or the father could complete the survey. Most parents would commonly have at least a diploma and/or a university degree in this generation of parents. Small nuclear families with both parents working full time is common; therefore, it is also common for their children to be enrolled in EC settings.

EC teachers in Singapore are representative of the four languages present in this country: English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil. English is the main mode of instruction; while EC settings also have the responsibility to lay the foundation for children's mother-tongue language development. The most commonly available mother-tongue language teacher in EC settings is for the Mandarin language. Singaporean children are expected to be bilingual; hence, both English and the mother tongue are incorporated into every EC setting. For the purposes of this study, only English EC teachers were interviewed.

EC teachers in Singapore can possess a range of qualifications, ranging from certificate level qualifications to postgraduate degrees. Therefore, it was essential to identify the specific qualifications of EC teachers for the purpose of this study. The qualification criterion for this study was teachers with a diploma qualification and above. The rationale for this criterion was based on the generic understanding of the job description and/or expectations of teachers within EC settings. Teachers with a diploma or higher qualification are responsible for writing and communicating documentation to parents during formal parent teacher conferences conducted at least twice a year. A diploma and/or higher qualification is also indicative of the ability to understand and critically analyse the information provided from the survey analysis, and to reflect and comment on the survey data during the interview. Five English teachers responded to the email invitation to participate in phase two of the study.

3.3. Study Design

This study comprised two phases and two groups of participants (see Figure 3.1). Phase one consisted of developing and distributing an online survey, and phase two involved conducting semi-structured, one-to-one interviews. Phase one obtained information on participants' demographics, understanding, experiences, beliefs and perspectives on documentation. This data provides a broad scope on parents' perceptions of documentation in different EC settings located across Singapore. A survey approach was considered an appropriate data collection method for gathering information from a varied catchment of parents when examining 'documentation', a phenomena that is under researched in the EC context in Singapore (Johnson & Christenson, 2014; Walsh, 2012). Phase two captured teachers' responses to the key findings of the survey and on potential implications for their professional practice. This approach is considered appropriate when investigating under-researched concepts or phenomena that have not been previously studied (Denzin, 2010; Johnson & Christenson, 2014; Johnson & Turner, 2003). Each phase is explained as follows in terms of recruitment, data collection methods and the analysis. The design of this study aimed to reveal parents' and teachers' perspectives on EC documentation they experienced as a product and a process.

Figure 3.1. Study participants and phases

Participants	Phase One	Phase Two
Phase 1: • n=86 • Parents with children currently attending an EC setting and completed the survey. **Phase 2:** • n=5 • English teachers who were currently teaching in an EC setting and possess a diploma qualification and above	Online survey with open and close ended questions. **Section A** • Questions 1 to 8 • Demographics • Information such as ethnicity, qualifications and type of EC setting were collected. **Section B** • Questions 8 to 23 • Lived experiences • Comments about experienced as well as preferred EC documentation were collected.	• One-to-one in person interview with teachers to capture their reflections of the results from the questionnaires • Interviewees presented with the results from the survey in relation to lived experiences and preferred EC documentation. • Teachers comment on the results by reflecting on aspects that align with their own teach

3.3.1. Phase 1 – Online survey with open and close ended questions

Recruitment. In accordance with the ethics approval obtained for the study (see Appendix 1), initial parent participants for the online survey were identified through existing networks of the student researcher. A single text message with the study brief and the URL for the survey was sent to 40 known parents of children aged under six years, who were currently attending an EC setting in Singapore, with a request for them to pass on the URL to their contacts. This snowball strategy (Creswell, 2014) was adopted to support the purpose of collecting responses from parents across different EC settings from various parts of the country, reflecting the cultural and socio-economic diversity of Singapore's population. The selection criteria were kept broad in order to capture as many diverse perspectives from parents who have children attending various EC settings as possible.

Data collection methods. The survey was created through a Qualtrics Macquarie University account and made available throughout April 2018. The survey consisted of both close and open questions about the parents' values regarding EC documentation and their lived experiences with EC documentation. It also sought to collect some demographic information on the parents without compromising their privacy as individuals. A total of 86 completed surveys were obtained from 116 attempts. Fifteen participants clicked on the link but did not start the survey, and 17 attempted the survey but did not answer all the questions, which incomplete attempts were eliminated from the data. The 86 valid responses were thus analysed and included in the presentation of the findings.

Analysis. The data collected from the survey were analysed to explore parents' perspectives on EC documentation based on two aspects: their general understanding of documentation in EC settings; and within the context of the centre their child was attending. All quantitative survey data were collated and analysed to identify frequencies and percentages of responses. In addition, all qualitative survey data based on open ended questions were analysed for recurring themes.

3.3.2. Phase 2 – One-to-one, in person interview

Recruitment. Eight teachers from the student researcher's contacts currently employed in EC settings were sent the information about the study via email, seeking volunteers to participate

in the study (see Appendix 2). Of these, five accepted the invitation to participate by signing the consent form.

Data collection methods. Using both the quantitative and qualitative data collected and collated in phase one, eight visuals were developed (see Appendix 3). These visuals summarised the data collected through the surveys, as presented through pie charts, bar charts and quotes by survey participants. This collection of visuals was used as a provocation for reflection during the interviews. During the interviews, teachers were asked to consider the data presented in the visuals and answer some reflective questions (see Appendix 4) regarding the data and their own lived experiences as EC teachers. With consent from the participants, each interview was audio-recorded.

Analysis. To ensure confidentiality and privacy, the teachers who were interviewed have been allocated pseudonyms ensuring that they cannot be identified (see Table 4.1), and their EC setting names have also been kept anonymous. The interviews were transcribed for ease of analysis and identification of common themes or threads of thinking based on the teachers' reflections on the survey findings. The responses were also cross-referenced with survey data to ascertain similarities and differences as appropriate.

3.4. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are essential in engaging in any form of human research. Ethical considerations include aspects of consent, freedom to withdraw, confidentiality, anonymity and privacy (Creswell, 2014; Girvan & Savage, 2012; Johnson & Christenson, 2014; Sales & Folkman, 2002). There is no central agency or governing body for conducting research within the EC sector in Singapore. Therefore, formal ethics approval was obtained only from the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee (Reference: 5201800061) which was adhered to in all aspects of data collection, collation and analysis and will be adhered to when doing any presentations and publications based on data emerging from this study. A copy of the ethics approval for this research is available in Appendix 1.

Complying with and adhering to these research principles minimises the incidence of research misconduct (Johnson & Christenson, 2014; Stutchbury & Fox, 2009). In phase one, the invitation email or text message sent to potential participants contained details of the study and

also the voluntary nature of the survey (see Appendix 5). At the start of the survey, participants were once again reminded of this and not to begin the survey should they choose not to participate (see Appendix 6). It was also made clear that the survey responses were all anonymous. Interview participants also gave written consent to participate to ensure that their decision to participate was completely voluntary. They were reminded they were able to withdraw from the process at any time without an explanation or consequences. The study was completed without any ethical incidents.

Researcher positioning. The processes outlined in the ethics application were followed when recruiting individuals. As the initial 40 invitees for phase one were known contacts, only one initial contact was made to each participant to ensure that they did not feel compelled to participate. This also reinforced my professional boundaries as a researcher. Adapting the strategy of sending the initial text message in two batches enabled me to gauge how the snowballing process was moving along. The demographical information collected was general to ensure that personal details were minimal and individuals could not be identified.

The EC teacher participants were contacted directly by me, the student researcher. Two of the English EC teacher participants were known to me, and the other participants were contacts from my extensive EC network in Singapore. A number of strategies were utilised to ensure that all participants were at ease and comfortable when the interviews were being conducted. This included situating myself as a learner, trying to understand participants' experiences and perceptions about EC documentation. It was also emphasized that this research was a personal undertaking for postgraduate studies and did not have any association with my current employment role and the employing organisation. Every effort was made to ensure objectivity and professionalism throughout this research and participants were kept informed of the voluntary nature of their involvement.

3.5. Limitations of the study

Due to the duration and expectations of this MRes candidature, this was a small-scale study with constraints of time and resources. The survey in phase one was presented to participants in English only. This possibly posed as a potential barrier to parents who were monolingual and were only competent in reading and writing in their mother tongue. The demographics of parents within this study were mostly individuals with an undergraduate degree or higher qualification

and who were mainly Chinese. This may also be indicative of their socio-economic backgrounds. If the survey was made available in other community languages, it is possible that the participant numbers could have been increased, thereby also expanding the diversity of the demographics. The snowballing approach could also potentially narrow the demographics, as there is possibility that participants' contacts were reflective of their own ethnic groups, age group and/or qualifications. Due to time constraints and size of the study, phase two had to be completed within a short span of time. Inviting and receiving a response from the interview participants took longer than anticipated. A greater number of both English and Mother Tongue teachers from a larger variety of EC settings, ethnic background, experience and qualifications would add to the diversity of the reflections.

3.6. Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the methodology used in this study. This study consisted of two phases; and the considerations at each phase was further elaborated. A few main categories of details were addressed: the recruitment process of the participants (background and rationale); ethical considerations before and during the course of the study; the data collection methodology; the analysis of the data; and discussion of possible limitations of the study.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the findings from both phases of the study. The data is presented in four sub-sections. Section 4.1 provides the demographics of the participants and the type and content of documentation found in EC settings in Singapore. Section 4.2 provides data based on parents' perspectives on documentation. Section 4.3 focuses on how teachers reflected on these findings and articulated their own beliefs about documentation. The final section presents parents' and teachers' considerations of practice, and policy implications of this study.

4.1. Contextualising the Study

The demographical information of the centres, parents and teachers presented here provides the background context of this study based in Singapore. Survey findings of parents' identification of the types and content of documentation they received from EC settings supplement the overall contextualisation of this study.

EC settings and locations. Parents in this study used a mix of EC settings reflective of most families in Singapore as discussed in Chapter 1. The online survey data analysis shows that the majority of parents in this study (n=51 or 59%) had their child attending full-day child care. Four participants (5%) used half-day child care, and only one family used full-time infant care. Another 30 participants (35%) identified their child as attending a kindergarten. As can be seen, less than 27% (n=23) were children from zero to three years, and with the overwhelming majority of 73% (n=63) being children aged three to six years.

Figure 4.1. Distribution of children by age
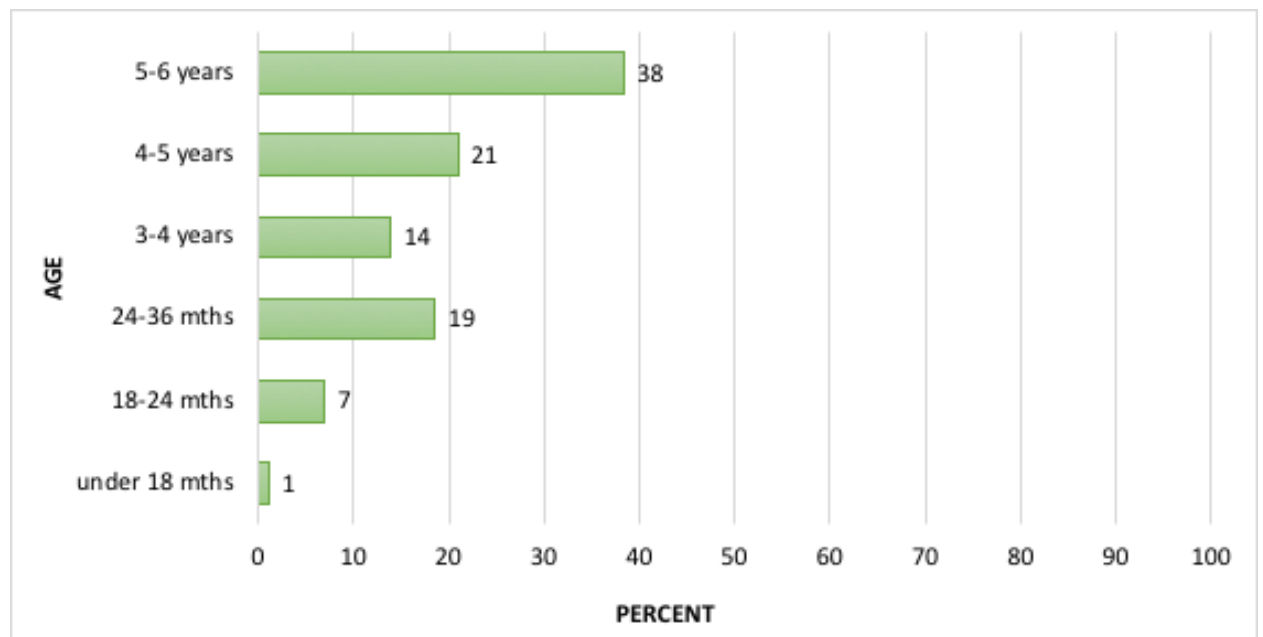
Likewise, based on the participants' identification of the nearest Singapore Mass Rapid Transit (SMRT) train station to the EC setting their child was attending (see Appendix 7), it was found that there was a reasonable spread of settings across the island included in this study.

Parents' demographics. Participants in this study comprised of 86 parents with children aged six years and below attending an EC setting in 2018. Of these, 74 participants (86%) identified as Chinese, eight as Malay (9%), two as Indian (2%), one as Eurasian (1%) and one Japanese (1%). This racial mix was reflective of Singapore's population as noted in Chapter 1. The vast majority of participants who completed the survey were mothers (n=76 or 88%) and the proportion of fathers was 12% (n=10). More than three quarters of participants (n=74 or 86%) held a Bachelor degree or above, and the lowest qualification identified was GCE O levels (n=1 or 1%). The majority of participants (n=60 or 70%) were first-time parents enrolling their child in an EC setting; and the remaining 26 (30%) had previous experience with another child attending an EC setting.

Teachers' demographics. The five teachers who participated in the one-to-one interviews were employed at five different EC settings (see Table 4.1). Four were from childcare centres, and one was from a kindergarten; and four identified as Chinese and one as Malay. The highest EC qualification held by two teachers were Diplomas. There were also one with a Bachelor degree

and one with a Masters degree; and another who was currently enrolled in a Bachelor degree. Their teaching experience ranged between four to 15 years. While two teachers worked with four to five year olds, the others taught children aged 18 to 36 months.

Table 4.1. Teacher demographics

Pseudonym	Ethnic group	Qualifications	Experience	Type of setting	Teaching age group
Elaine	Chinese	Master degree	4 years	Kindergarten	4-5 years
Elena	Chinese	Diploma	6 years	Child care	18-24 months 24-36 months
Kelly	Chinese	Diploma Bachelor degree (in progress)	15 years	Child care	4-5 years
Nadi	Malay	Diploma	11 years	Child care	18-24 months
Samantha	Chinese	Bachelor degree	12 years	Child care	24-36 months

These demographical characteristics suggest that the mix of teachers in this study had a reasonable background to comment about the documentation used in EC settings in Singapore.

Documentations received from EC settings. Based on the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, the survey listed 15 documentation types, and invited participants to select the ones which applied to their experiences. When analysing the findings, 13 of these documentation types were classified into three main categories: individualised educational documentation; generalised functional documentation; and documentation that might fall into both categories depending on centre practice, which is indicated by ***** in the listing below.

i) <u>Individualised educational documentation</u> consisting of documentation that typically reflects the individual child, their learning and development:

- Collection of work samples (n=77 or 90%)
- Photographs with brief descriptions/captions (n=65 or 76%)
- Developmental reports/summaries of your child's learning and development (n=60 or 70%)
- Observations records (n=45 or 52%)

- Learning stories (n=17 or 20%)

- Photographs without descriptions* (n=12 or 14%)

- Checklists* (n=11 or 13%)

- Videos* (n=10 or 12%)

- Scrapbooks* (n=7 or 8%)

ii) <u>Generalised functional documentation</u> comprising documentation that was typically concerned with a particular class and/or all the children at the centre:

- Newsletters (n=45 or 52%)

- Home work (n=40 or 47%)

- Home activities (n=22 or 26%)

- Classroom blogs (n=13 or 15%)

Just over half of the participants (n=48 or 56%) received both printed and digitised documentation from their EC settings. Likewise, just over one quarter of participants (n=23 or 27%) only received printed copies, and 16% (n=14) indicated they only received digitised documentation. The use of social media to document and communicate with parents was almost evenly split, with about half of the parents (n=36 or 42%) confirming its use and the remaining 58% (n=50) indicating that their EC settings did not use social media to communicate their child's learning with them. The most commonly used social media platforms identified by parents were an in-house app (n=15 or 42%) and Whatsapp (n=15 or 42%), followed by Facebook (n=10 or 28%). Two participants indicated they had not received any documentation at all from their EC settings. The popularity frequency of each type of documentation can be seen in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2. Types of documentation received by parents

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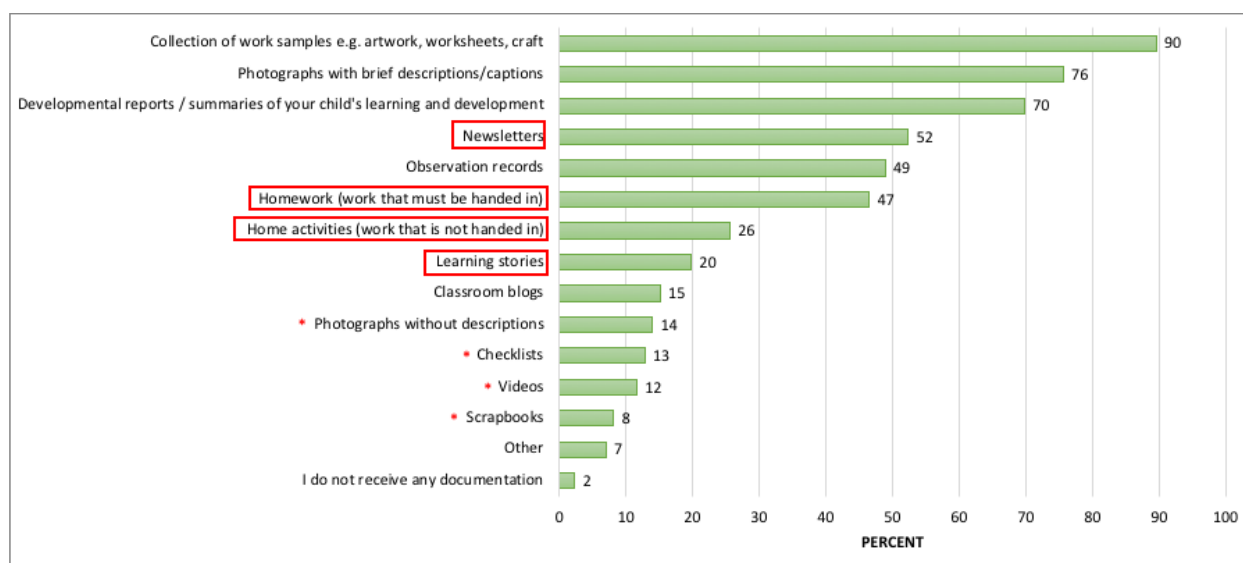
The five most commonly received documentation by parents were the collection of their children's work samples (n=77 or 90%), photographs with brief descriptions/captions (n=65 or 76%), developmental reports/summaries of child's learning and development (n=60 or 70%), newsletter (n=45 or 52%), and observational records (n=42 or 49%). Participants also listed a few other documentations in the 'other' category, comprising: storybooks to be read at home; communication books; notices; letters; excursion general photos; fee receipts; and email updates. These were all categorised under generalised functional documentation, as they provided general information about the centre or class and were not directly connected with children's learning and development.

Content of documentation received from EC settings. The survey presented parents with 14 options to indicate the content and purpose of the documentation they had received. They were able to select all the options that applied. These options were also divided into the same two categories reflecting either individualised or generalised functional documentation as indicated in Table 4.2. As can be seen in Table 4.2, parents' choices overall indicated a strong acknowledgement of individualised documentation about their children over more generalised functional documentation. That is, almost all parents (n=77 or 90%) selected the focus on their child's learning as the primary content area covered in the documentation they received. Interestingly, the second most common choice indicated by 78% of parents (n=67) was their child's interactions with staff, whilst documentation on interactions with peers was selected by

a small proportion of participants (n=18 or 21%). Less than half the parents selected general functional documentation types, including practical aspects concerned with future events (n=42 or 49%), and their own child's daily routines was selected by only 20% of parents (n=17).

Table 4.2. Parents' perceptions about what the documentation was usually about

	n	%
Individualised educational documentation		
My child's learning	77	90%
My child's interactions with staff in the centre	67	78%
Activities my child is engaged in	51	59%
My child's development	45	52%
Learning goals for my child	32	37%
My child's interactions with peers	18	21%
My child's responses	14	16%
Generalised functional documentation		
Future school events	42	49%
The teacher's future planning for the entire class	29	34%
The teacher's future planning and teaching objectives for my child	29	34%
The activities my child's class is doing	17	20%
My child's daily routines	17	20%
Other (n=6 or 7% with one nil entry):		

"When there's abnormality, e.g. extreme moodiness or feeling a little unwell in school"

- "Only the photos about all the children, I couldn't find my child there"
- "Communication book to address issues like if child got hurt or to bring something",
- "A channel for us as parents to check with the teacher on anything"
- "General reminders"

_____

Four out of the five most identified options were in the individualised educational documentation category, and the three least identified options had two items that were of a generalised nature. The comments by parents who specified 'other' options mainly fell into the generalised functional documentation category, as these reflected one-off or unusual issues/events rather than focusing on ongoing learning or development.

4.2. Parents' perspectives

The parents' survey asked questions that focused on the respondents' beliefs and lived experiences with documentation. Findings on how parents viewed the documentation they received, in terms of the quality, frequency, sufficiency and intended purpose, are presented next.

Frequency of documentation. In responding to the survey, parents indicated how often they received documentation from their child's EC setting by selecting one from four options (daily, weekly, once a term, or once a year) or specifying 'other'. Parents' responses to the 'other' category were analysed as comprising three additional options: monthly, half a year, and when applicable. All responses are presented in Figure 4.3. The single response indicating that the parent had not received any documentation "not even once a term" (Survey 66) is not included in this.

Figure 4.3. Frequency of documentation received
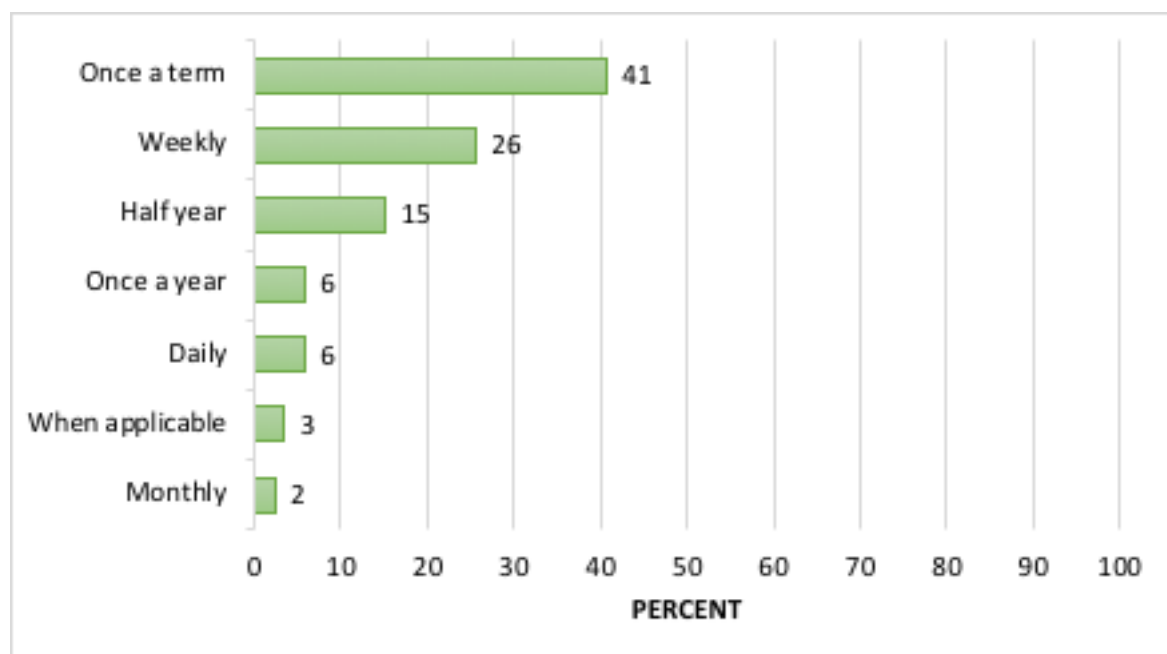
Note: The proportions do not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

As can be seen, the majority of parents (n=35 or 41%) indicated that their centres sent some type of documentation at least once a term. This is followed by just over one quarter of parents (n=22 or 26%) who received documentation at least once a week. Another 15% (n=13) selected the half

yearly option. The remaining options were selected by a small minority of parents comprising two to three percent of the participants.

Quality of documentation. Participants were asked to assess the nature of the documentation they received in several ways. Firstly, when asked if they thought the documentation they received was *informative*, 91% (n=78) of parents answered 'yes'. Justifying their answers, parents referred to the content of the documentation in terms of their own child's learning and their day-to-day activities as illustrated by the following comments in the survey:

- "I get to know what they learn in lessons, such as topics and/or skills. I also get to see how the activities are conducted." (Survey25)

- "Since she is in a full day childcare, I am able to keep track of at least her well-being in school through these documentations [*sic*]." (Survey29)

- "He [*sic*] teachers make the effort to keep track of the little things that my children do in school aside from their class activities." (Survey23)

- "I know clearly what my child is learning, what my child is doing, and what my child is eating/or not eating every week." (Survey39)

These comments indicate parents' interests in receiving documentation about their child's learning and wellbeing. The remaining parents who answered 'no' (n=8 or 9%) in terms of the documentation being informative were mostly concerned with the lack of content, details and/or personalisation in the documentation. Their perspectives are illustrated in comments such as the following:

- "The documentation shows the end result. I am more interested in the process of my child achieving that and the objectives are the same." (Survey45)

- "There is hardly any feedback on how he does if it is not intentionally sought after." (Survey32)

- "Not mentioned if it was assisted or independent work." (Survey54)

- "Not much info about my child." (Survey47)

These comments suggest that parents in this study were clearly discerning of the documentation they received and had clear expectations of what they would like to see in the documentation they received from EC settings.

Secondly, parents completing the survey were also asked whether they thought that the documentation they received was *sufficient*, and participants were restricted to selecting 'yes' or

'no' and invited to comment about their choice. The definition of 'sufficient' was open to interpretation, as the notion of sufficiency can differ from parent to parent. This question yielded 64% (n=55) 'yes' it is sufficient and 36% (n=31) 'no' it is not sufficient responses. When justifying their positive answers, most parents (n=26 or 30%) referred to the content of the documentation with comments such as the following:

- "It shows us of the weekly/daily activities of the learning and playing time." (Survey14)

- "There are details on sleep timing, food intake, whether or not she showered, how her mood was for the day, and significant happenings for the day." (Survey44)

- "The childcare is very detailed about their documentation which is good in assuring me that my child is learning sufficiently, interacting well and enjoying class overall." (Survey39)

- "Documents various domains of development with pictures and explanation of the activities." (Survey31)

As can be seen, these comments referred to individual children's development, learning and routines, as well as general activities at the centre. These comments, however, did not indicate the extent to which there was sufficient depth and formal assessment of development and learning in the documentation received by parents.

A number of parents (n=11 or 13%) related '*sufficiency*' to the amount of documentation and the frequency with which documentation was shared with comments such as the following:

- "It is just enough for me to stay connected with what my daughter is doing in school and yet not too much that I can keep up with." (Survey42)

- "To report meaningful observation, time is needed. Once a term of 10 weeks is a good time frame for such documentation." (Survey9)

- "Teacher is competent enough to provide info when necessary." (Survey52)

Other parents (n=8 or 9%) made comments about a combination of factors - the content of the documentation, and the quantity of documentation - but also brought to light how they saw documentation as important but not critical. One parent, it appears, valued the quality of teaching and did not want teachers to neglect teaching at the expense of preparing documentation:

- "Allows me enough information to meet the expectations I mentioned earlier. Also I would be concerned if too much documentation is provided, which means the teachers may have

to spend a lot of time preparing the documentation, at the expense of teaching my child well." (Survey61)

Thirdly, those parents who expressed dissatisfaction with the documentation they received (n=31 or 36%) provided a variety of reasons for this. Some parents indicated that the content of the documentation and inclusions they wanted were missing. For instance, some parents wanted documentation specific to their own child, rather than about activities completed by the whole class/group:

- "I hope to receive documentations that is more child specific rather than activities done as a class or as a school." (Survey19)
- "It doesn't seem personal enough. Looks more like a template they give all parents." (Survey66)

There were also contrasting expectations, where some parents wanted to know how their children were doing academically, and others wanted a focus on social interactions:

- "It is more on how she is doing academically but not a lot on her social interaction and how she responds to teachers." (Survey10)
- "I am not really able to gauge her academic skills from the activities photos." (Survey12)

Some parents were also dissatisfied with the format of the documentation or the lack of information, particularly in terms of using photos and checklists reflecting routines:

- "Sometimes I wonder if the photos are staged…." (Survey5)
- "Only the ticks on the eating routine, no any words comments [*sic*] about my child's activities." (Survey47)
- "The documentation just showed the end result." (Survey45)
- "It doesn't specify what learning objective this activity has and if my child has attain [*sic*] that skill, it is merely a description of the activity my child is doing." (Survey16)

Other parents wanted the teachers to provide them with information on how to support children's learning at home and at school:

- "It says what the teacher wants to focus on - not necessarily what is important to the parents or find a point for parents and teachers to work together on." (Survey75)

- "Would be good if parents were given some tips on how to engage their child too, in line with the activities they do in school." (Survey81)

When cross-referencing this question on sufficiency with the type of EC setting the child was attending, the percentage of participants who answered 'yes' and 'no' yielded the exactly the same distribution for both child care centres and kindergartens (n=56 or 65% yes and n=30 or 35% no, respectively).

Purpose of documentation. The purpose of documentation was explored in several ways. Firstly, parents were asked what they perceived as the main reason that their child's EC teacher used documentation. This was a choice question where they were provided with five choices from which they could only choose one answer. These options and the rate of responses are presented in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4. Parents' perceptions of why teachers used documentation
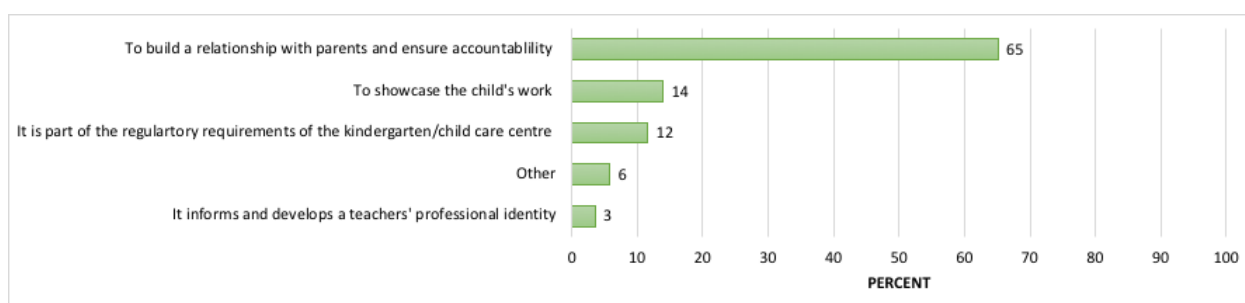
More than half of the parents (n=56 or 65%) chose 'to build a relationship with parents and ensure accountability', whilst only three parents (3%) chose 'it informs and develops a teacher's professional identity'. It would have been clearer if these options were articulated in a clearer manner, such as giving an example of what the teacher's professional identity is referring to and also further elaborating on 'accountability'. Here 'accountability' was referring to parent accountability, which essentially can be quite different to building a relationship and accountability towards policy and regulations. The five (n=5 or 6%) parents who chose 'other' made the following comments:

- "to involve parents in their development of the children in school", which is related to parent partnerships;

- "to document children's progress for future lesson plans", which has a focus on the teacher's teaching responsibility;

- "to make learning visible", which is in relation to the child;

- "there is hardly any documentation except for half yearly parent teacher meetings"; and

- "I think it is a combination of all the above mentioned."

These comments show some differences in the definition of the options provided in the survey questions; hence, the parents chose 'other'. One of the parents could not make a decision despite the question stating, 'the main reason'; and another clearly did not understand the question.

Parents also responded to a series of statements indicating whether they agreed or disagreed about the main reasons for documentation.

Table 4.3. Parents' ratings on statements about the purpose of documentation

Statements	Agree		Disagree	
	n	%	n	%
1) Documentation enables parents to know their child better.	83	97%	3	3%
2) Documentation enables teachers to engage parents in enhancing children's development and learning	82	95%	4	5%
3) Documentation supports teachers in their teaching.	80	93%	6	7%
4) Documentation gives children the opportunity to voice their learning.	65	76%	21	24%
5) Documentation is an important indicator whether a kindergarten/child care centre is doing a good job	60	70%	36	30%

An overwhelming majority of parents, comprising more than 93% or above, agreed with the two statements that connected parents' desire for information about their child. The third most popular statement focused on teachers and the fourth on capturing children's voices. The final statement focused on parents' perceptions about the connectivity between documentation and accountability of the centre, with almost one third of respondents (n=36 or 30%) disagreeing with this statement. These responses need to be considered together with the findings on the implications of this study, as analysed in Section 4.4 of this chapter.

4.3. Teachers' reflections

During the interviews, the five teachers participating in this study were invited to reflect on a series of data points during an interview (see Appendix 3). Reflective comments made by the teachers were analysed and are presented in this section. During the interview, the teachers recalled their own documentation practices and thoughts about EC documentation as teachers, and their experiences working with families, providing additional perspective into what the data were showing.

Content and purpose of documentation. During interviews, the teachers described their own perceptions about the purpose of documentation in a variety of ways. They all explained that their perceptions were shaped by their own experiences of working in different EC settings in the sector. The types of documentation they recounted as teachers were mainly observations of children, online portfolios, and various functional updates such as excursions, things to take note of, or messages regarding the child such as eating and sleeping. These documentations contained children's development and learning in a class or the EC setting as well as children's interactions with their peers. Photographs and parent teacher conferences were mentioned in their responses as well. For example, Samantha spoke about the shift in focus based on the age of the children she was documenting for, and what was important to her to capture in a documentation:

> Usually I will tend to focus more on the interaction and the social emotional status because I'm taking the younger children, so at this point of time interactions with adults, with peers and their surroundings are more important and also their social well-being, so it should start from young to cultivate good etiquette and good relationship so that in future, when they grow up, they can be well respected not necessarily in a sense of educations [*sic*].

Parents' comments, on the other hand, did not refer to documentation on children's interactions with peers nor distinguish between children's age groups such as infants or pre-schoolers.

According to Kelly, engaging in documentation helps with fulfilling accreditation requirements:

> Because I find that ... right now, we are doing a lot of documentations [*sic*]. Actually, it's because of SPARK requirement... I know that documentations is [*sic*] important to a certain extent but I don't find it's the most important. So, if we are supposed to do

a lot of documentations which is one of the feedback… it takes off the teacher's time and we may not be able to concentrate on teaching, on the children, proper lesson plans for the children, or we just so-called fake the documentation just because we want to pass through SPARK requirement...

Of particular interest was Kelly's comments reflecting the possibility of a lack of authenticity of the documentation when teachers simply pursued compliance requirements.

Audience for documentation. All five teachers agreed that parents were a key audience for documentation in EC settings. They also identified parents as the main recipient of the documentation or mentioned what they hoped to communicate to parents through the documentation. Elena, for example, rationalised the importance of ensuring that what was sent to parents had to be 'presentable', and shared her values about how photographs should be presented:

I guess parents… for them I guess may be the photos are taken too nicely so they will think that we ask to position this way. To stand this way… I guess for certain photos to be sent out to parents [*sic*]… It's got to be presentable… I don't think if (centres) should send out photos that are like messy and untidy.

Nadi indicated other reasons for documenting, by highlighting children as a possible audience:

I think when I do documentation, it's like not so much for the parent … small bits is [*sic*] for the parent but it's also for the children as well so they can revisit whatever they've learnt. And it's also for us, it's for planning and assessing the child. Yeah. So yeah, that would be my main thing for documentation.

This teacher's comments indicated the mutual benefits of documentation for children as well as parents and teachers.

Samantha's comments illustrated the potential use of documentation aimed at parents for a different purpose. Here, documentation was perceived as evidence for parents about what their child was able to achieve despite having doubts about their child's capabilities:

…we want the parents to know how well the child is doing, how capable your child can be, because some parents they will think that my child can't do this, but in school she can, so it's like, they are quite surprised to see that, so I think for documentation

it's important to let the parents know that you need to have faith and confidence in your child and not just to think that your child is unable to do a certain challenge.

These comments reflect how teachers use documentation to advocate for children. Survey responses also indicate that some parents were aware of the potential of documentation in terms of informing and developing their professional identity (see Section 4.2.3); this was, however, a small minority of 3% (n=3), and there were no comments in the surveys made by parents specifically about advocacy.

Awareness of the value of parents' perspectives on documentation. The teachers affirmed the results from the survey as reflective of their experiences with working with parents in EC settings. They were aware of or clearly able to the identify why parents would make certain decisions, choices or comments. Samantha, for example, clearly explained that she used a communication book to pass on messages from the centre to children's homes, and vice versa, saying, "…because parents are working, so they seldom have time to go back home to read through the communication book, and even if they do it's just maybe just flip through the pages and just look at it."

There were a few instances where the teachers were surprised by some of the parents' comments. Commenting on the overall survey findings, Elena, for instance, shared that she was surprised by some of the parents' expectations of documentation: "I would say 50/50. There are some things I do. There are some I don't. For the things that I don't do, it actually surprised me that parents are actually looking for all this."

Likewise, Elaine commented on parents' rating of documentation as very important in their selection of an EC setting:

In terms of the selection, I'm quite surprised, because I would have thought that documentation wouldn't, even though they would have experienced it, but they may not have thought about it when they first select a setting, because I will imagine that they will look at programs or they will look at environment or location rather than documentation.

Nadi, however, did not find this surprising: "… if they don't see anything in the class right, if there's no documentation, they will assume that there's no learning in the class. So, yeah. So

that's why I guess they select it…" On the other hand, Kelly sounded relieved to know that parents were aligned with the EC perspectives of the significance of documentation:

> … actually it is good thing that they find that documentations is, overall, is quite important, because it is true that it is quite important in the sense that it shows to a certain extent of the child's learning, behaviour, interaction with peers or staff, everything... So, it's good to know that parents actually see this as quite important.

Samantha affirmed that documentation could address the challenges of developing partnerships with parents:

> Because now in our sector, it's lacking a lot on this parent partnership thing [*sic*]. So I think it's nice to have parents to understand where the teacher is coming from, and it's also nice for the teachers to know where the parents are coming from. So parents-teacher's partnerships are very important in this way we can have a transparent relationship with them and everything put across to them is easily understood… For me, documentation is just a hard copy of what the parents can't see of their child's learning milestones at school…

Kelly, on the other hand, shared how she was surprised by parents' perspectives on the reason for teachers' documentation being to build parent-teacher partnerships:

> I find that parents don't feel this, that providing them documentation about their child is actually to build parent-teachers partnership. It's more like we are doing our job, we have to do this job because we are the teachers. We spend more time ... eight hours, nine hours ... over here with their children. So, we are supposed to provide them with the photos, the videos, documentation, everything to them. So, this doesn't help to build parent-teacher partnership.

Overall, as can be seen from the preceding discussion, the five teachers, despite being from different centres and with varying experiences, revealed some commonalities in their experiences and their understandings of the way parents perceived documentation in EC settings.

4.4. Implications of this study

Findings in this section are based on two survey questions containing parents' perspectives, and interview responses reflecting teachers' perceptions about the implications for practice and policy.

Importance of documentation for parents. Parents were given the opportunity to indicate the importance of documentation in two ways. Firstly, the majority of the parents (n=67 or 78%) rated documentation as a very or extremely important component in their overall experience of the EC setting. It is clear that parents view documentation as a key part of their experience within the EC settings.

Figure 4.5. Parents' ratings on the importance of documentation
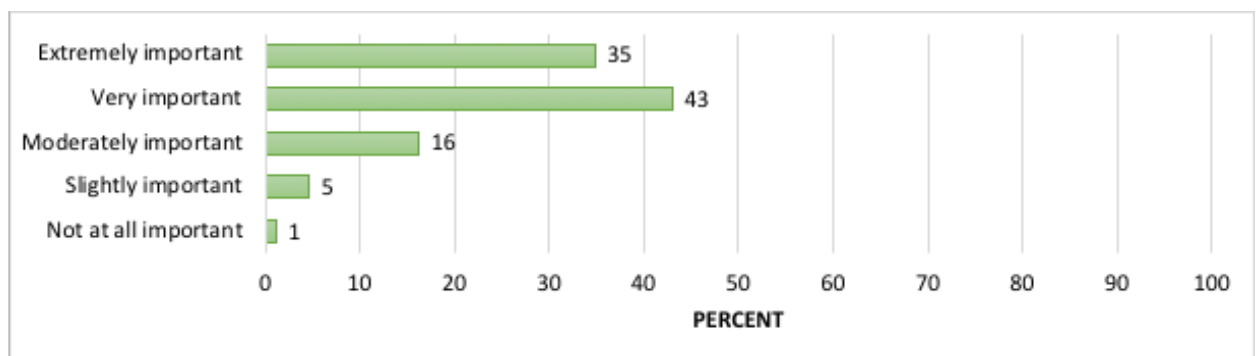
Specifically, the survey also asked parents to rate whether documentation had been a selection criterion when choosing an EC setting for their child. In responding to this question, using a scale of 1 to 10 where 10 was extremely important and 1 was not important at all, 76% of the parents (n=65) rated documentation as being important, with a rating of 7 and above. The data analysis also indicates that three quarters of these participants (n=64 or 75%) were parents who had enrolled their child in an EC setting for the first time.

What parents want to see in documentation. In the survey, parents were invited to explain why they would like to receive documentation from EC settings. When their comments to an open-ended question were collated, four themes emerged as follows:

a) Documentation as a source of information.

These parents believed that documentation informed them of what their child was doing at the EC setting and how their child was developing and progressing in their learning. This view is reflected in comments such as, "In a way to understand more about how my child is cooping [*sic*] in school" (Survey63), "To know what is going on" (Survey73), and "As it is a quick drop off and pick up everyday [*sic*] we don't really get to have a proper chat with the teacher or see her just to find out how our child is doing. I think especially if my child is in the younger age group. I would like to know more since she is so young..." (Survey56).

b) Documentation as a measure of accountability.

This category is linked to parents' expectations of what EC settings should be doing for their child. Mostly, these parents wanted to know whether the EC setting was educating and being accountable for their child's learning; with comments such as, "So I would understand if the school curriculum is helping my kid" (Survey33) and "So I know my child is properly observed and assessed" (Survey55). These comments suggest that some parents view documentation as a form of assessment or proof of the EC setting's performance as an educational space for their children.

c) Documentation as a means to build parent-teacher partnership.

The comments placed in this category articulated the communication and continuity of expectations between parents and teachers. There were comments such as, "Enable communicate [*sic*] between teachers and parents" (Survey57), "Home-school partnership is important in children's learning and development. It benefits both sides" (Survey19), and "To work closely with teachers on the area of concerns" (Survey15), which alluded to this theme. Likewise, these parents also saw documentation as an avenue for parents to take action and continue to support their child's learning. This aspect is illustrated by comments such as, "Allows me to monitor his learning progress and support his learning at home, by reinforcing what was being taught in school. Also shows my child that I am interested in what he is learning in school and want to know more about what he does in school" (Survey34), and "... to help enhance their knowledge with appropriate learnings outside school. To praise and reward them when they excel" (Survey21).

d) Documentation as memory.

The collection of comments included in this theme suggested that documentation was a form of memory, not only for the child but also for the parent. Parents made comments such as, "...

photos are more for memory sake especially since this is her first time in school (K1) …” (Survey84), “… gives me fond memories of my child's growing years” (Survey65), and “Memories for child as they grow older” (Survey18).

It is clear that documentation is an essential part of the parents' experience of the EC setting. Parents also have varying reasons for wanting to receive documentation about their child from their respective EC settings.

Teachers' reflections on implications for practice and policy. All five teachers named teachers and centre leaders as key groups of people who should have access to the findings presented in this study, as they saw the importance of these key stakeholders understanding parents' perspectives in order to better determine their approach to documentation. For example, Elena said, “By seeing all these it allows me to really understand why parents think that it is important to receive documentations. It helps me understand what they are looking for. Whether they are appreciative of whatever is given to them.”

Both Kelly and Elaine pointed out the possibility of sharing the data from this study with the government. Both also indicated satisfaction with parents' awareness of the reality of workload implications for teachers during their interview. Elaine shared:

> I guess what's interesting with this one, the one that kind of jumped out at me was the bit about this parent where she said, oh it'll be concerning there is too much documentation because teachers are just preparing that rather than teaching my child well, which is a very astute observation because it's true. Every teacher is busy documenting. Then there's also interaction time taken away from the classroom… It means maybe he has relegated that learning process, everything to the school. If I leave my child in the school, it means that I just trust you are going to groom my child or take care of my child so that it allows my child to learn. It doesn't really matter. I would rather you do your job than tell me what my child is doing.

Kelly, in particular, clearly wanted change: “I find that if all these are shown to the government, the ECDA, I think there may be less bit of the documentations... the requirement of this (documentation)...” These comments allude to potential usefulness of this research in influencing national EC policy in Singapore.

4.5. Chapter Summary

This chapter presented findings from both phases one and two. It highlighted key findings on parents' perspectives as well as the teachers' reactions and their thinking about the parents' perspectives. These findings provide the background for data synthesis and re-conceptualisation of documentation in the concluding chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This research was stimulated by documentation in EC settings. The literature reviewed which informed the design and implementation of this research, is now used in this chapter to discuss the synthesis of the key findings emerging from the study in responding to the three research questions that shaped it. This chapter will also examine the contribution of this study to the EC sector, with a model for reconceptualising the continuum of documentation (see Figure 2.1) introduced in Chapter 2 being is revisited. The chapter concludes with a discussion of potential implications of this study for reforming EC policy and practice, as well as suggestions for further research into documentation in EC settings in Singapore.

5.1. Key findings – A synthesis

This study set out to explore three Research Questions (RQs). The findings that emerged through the data collected in phases one and two and presented in Chapter 4 are synthesised against each research question (RQ) as follows.

RQ1: What are parents' perspectives of documentation of their children's learning in EC settings in Singapore?
1. Parents found that documentation, when it was not generic and was focused on their child's development and learning, was informative.
2. Parents were satisfied with what they were receiving as documentation and were able to tell if the documentation was 'real' or authentic in capturing in the learning of their own child.
3. Parents perceived documentation as teachers attempting to build a partnership with them.

Parents were discerning of the information they received and had a clear view of what they were expecting to receive – in particular information regarding their children's development and learning. Parents' responses regarding the quality of the documentation, its frequency and satisfaction centred on information they received. The parents' main expectation of the EC setting was to demonstrate that their child was developing and learning, with documentation focusing primarily on their growth and acquisition of skills. (Arthur et al., 2018) highlight the importance of documenting children's growth and acquisition of skills when discussing EC

documentation. In considering the content of the documentation, the parents of this study, saw the main responsibility of an EC setting is to focus on their child's development and learning.

This same discernment made evident that parents were also not ignorant nor could they be 'fooled' about the authenticity of the information regarding their own child, even when the documentation included children's learning within a group. Parents were able to tell the difference between information received that was generalised about an activity their child was participating in and when the learning reported was specific to their child. Learning reported about the activities involving a group of children did not always demonstrate their own child's learning as an individual. The primary focus of parents' perceptions of quality were centred on the knowledge of learning and growth through active participation. Above all, parents valued and acknowledged teachers as knowing their child, when the documentation described their child specifically (Guo, 2015; Kersey & Masterson, 2009; Rouse, 2012; Rouse & Hadley, 2018).

There was however, some tension in terms of the teachers' work or the perceived expectations of what parents wanted to see as decided by an EC setting versus what the parents themselves actually wanted to see in the documentation. Based on the literature reviewed, this misconception of expectations is consistent with research in contexts outside Singapore (Breathnach, O'Gorman, & Danby, 2016; Demircan & Erden, 2014; Hadley, 2012). Teachers might view authentic photographs such as images of children in action, which may appear messy or untidy, to be inappropriate to include in documentation for parents (Elena). Consistent with Lehrer (2018), documentation has the potential to create positioning of the various stakeholders such as "daily reports construct an image of the 'good childcare child' as one who is happy and conforms to adult behaviour expectations…" (p.292) therefore, the practice of a conscious curation of appropriate images for parents can be the teachers' way of portraying a certain image of the child within the EC setting. The perceptions of what parents want to see as a learning outcome can result in teachers only reporting on the "end result" (survey 45) of learning, with little to no focus on the processes in which the children engaged and the strategies and skills used. This tension distracts teachers from reporting authentically on an individual child's learning, and results in a narrow purpose and focus on what may 'look good and appropriate' to demonstrate specific outcomes of learning.

It is concerning that there is potential that teachers are recording 'fake' documentation in order to keep up with policy expectations of the national documents such as the EYDF, NEL

and SPARK as shared by one of the teachers (Kelly) during the interview. Importantly, these national policy documents do not indicate the quantity of documentation expected but a minimum for two parent-teacher conferences a year is expected (ECDA, 2013, 2017; MOE, 2012). The quantity of documentation is therefore left to the individual EC setting, consistent with global trend (Livingstone & Hydon, 2019). Based on this study, it is evident based on the teachers' reflections, decisions about documentation is usually reflective of the marketing and the 'promise' to parents about the provisions of their program and setting. As such, the findings of this study indicate that the documentation in EC settings in Singapore aligns with the expectations of most parents surveyed. The study also affirms that the extent to which parents are sufficiently informed or are satisfied with the quality of documentation provided, though related, are separate matters.

In the literature reviewed, documentation is promoted as a means of building a reciprocal relationship between parents and teachers, where information about the child's learning and development is mutually shared (Birbili & Tzioga, 2014; Rintakorpi et al., 2014; Rouse, 2016; Rouse & O'Brien, 2017). in this study there was no mention of parents responding to the documentation in this way rather it is one-sided where the teacher reports about the child to the parents (Survey 29, Survey 39). There is also a perception that the parent-teacher partnership is dependent on teachers establishing the relationship with parents (Figure 4.4), frequently with a lack of understanding from parents on the nature of what teachers do. This was evident in this study from their responses to why they would like to receive documentation and the main purpose for teachers' documentation.

RQ2: What are teachers' reactions to parents' perspectives on documentation?
4. Two teachers were appreciative of the parent who saw documentation as taking the teacher away from their children. This parent declared that the main aim of a teacher's job was to teach and not produce endless documentations for parents.
5. None of the teachers perceived that the main reason for their documentation is to be a means for building parent-teacher partnerships.
6. There was disbelief expressed by all five teachers that parents were choosing a centre on the basis of documentation as a criterion measure, as they were aware there were other measures (such as the program, the location and environment/setting).

In this study, the teachers saw documentation as taking time away from teaching rather than supporting their teaching (Kelly and Elaine). This aligned with the view of one parent who expressly stated that "if too much documentation is provided, which means the teachers may

have to spend a lot of time preparing the documentation, at the expense of teaching my child well." (Survey61) as noted in chapter 4. Currently, EC documentation in Singapore serves a narrow purpose of reporting to parents about children's learning. It does not consider contemporary understandings of the place of documentation in the pedagogical approaches to developing the curriculum and program for children, as is proposed in the literature by those such as Fleet (2017), Forman and Fyfe (2012), Millikan and Giamminuti (2014) and Rinaldi (2001).

EC teachers are expected to fulfil multiple responsibilities, and documentation is most certainly one of these. However, there is no national policy in Singapore on how a teacher has to manage and prioritise documentation. Teachers in this study also saw documenting as separate to teaching. Some teachers in this study also saw documentation as disconnected to their teaching, and perceived documentation through a lens of additional work for compliance rather than a necessity.   Only one teacher viewed documentation a component that informs the teacher's professional identity.

Fleet et al. (2017a) assert that, when teachers believe that documentation is separate to and in addition to what they do every day, "it becomes a quality versus quantity dilemma; a 'must do' instead of a professional strategy for thinking about pedagogy" (p.3). Dahlberg et al. (2007) consider documentation to be at one with teaching, reinforcing the **LiLi** schema that Fleet (2017) proposes. In this schema, it "investigates decision-making frames inherent (and often invisible) when an educator pursues pedagogical documentation as a way of being with children. It aims to identify decision points that enhance or constrain the efficacy of this professional practice." (p.20) This approach reinforces how closely intertwined documentation is with the teacher's professional practice. Although this connection is reflected in the findings, how well this was understood by the participants in this study was not clear. There is a need then to consider how can the teachers be supported in their ability to better understand the significance of documentation and apply it to their daily lives as teachers.

Contrary to the parents' perspectives of documentation being the main means by which teachers build partnerships with parents, the teachers in this study, unanimously agreed that it was not their main focus. Interestingly, four out of five agreed that documentation is about the child, and their job role was to showcase the child's work, development, learning and abilities. Only one teacher (Nadi) clearly saw documentation as informing her professional identity, as part of enabling her to make future plans. Professional identity and the work of teachers are

intertwined (Forman & Fyfe, 2012). The recognition, validation and intimacy of reciprocal relationships with parents have far-reaching effects in creating a positive culture of learning with parents about their child. There is also a mutuality of understanding of the roles that parents and teachers separately play and contribute in the learning and development that is occurring (Douglass, 2011; Hadley & Rouse, 2018; Rouse, 2012; Rouse & O'Brien, 2017).

Regardless of their experience in the sector, all five participating teachers were cognisant of how parents situated documentation. They were pleased and somewhat surprised to note parents' acute interest in the documentation. However, the teachers were clearly unconvinced that documentation played a critical role in parents' selection of an EC setting. Instead, teachers considered the program, environment and location of the centre as primary selection criteria for parents enrolling at an EC setting. This reinforces earlier discussions on how documentation was viewed as work separate to teaching. A worrying notion is that documentation serves as surveillance and accountability for the 'many hours children spend with teachers', which was reinforced through the surveys (Survey 25, 73, 55) and teacher reflections (Kelly). In this way, documentation is viewed as what teachers were supposed to do or as evidence they were doing their job. In order for documentation to move beyond being a product of accountability to parents, teachers' understanding of the place of documentation in pedagogy needs to shift in order to find its place in the formation of their own pedagogy (Edwards et al., 2012; Livingstone & Hydon, 2019)

RQ3: What are the implications of these perspectives for the EC teachers in their documentation practice?
7. The survey findings indicate that there were vast inconsistencies in the practices adopted by EC settings in terms of the frequency of documentation provided to parents, and that perhaps there is a need to establish a baseline.
8. Three teachers spoke about documentation beyond just reporting back to parents, one of those teachers noted that documentation was part of their professional identity as an EC teacher.
9. Teachers noted that documentation needs to be meaningfully prepared, not just churned out to meet compliance requirements.

These key findings in response to RQ3, echo prior research in highlighting the complexity in the definition of documentation and the ways in which documentation is evidenced in EC settings. The lack of clear indication of the expected frequency and content of documentation within the national documents can cause confusion when the emphasis is placed on fulfilling

what is expected (Fleet et al., 2017a). This argument can be used in the Singaporean context where the national documentation such as SPARK and NEL can also create misunderstandings within the sector as each EC setting is left to make their own professional judgement on the type and amount of documentation to provide families. This ambiguity makes it difficult for EC settings to articulate to parents what is considered reasonable in terms of the frequency and content of documentation.

The above issue needs further discussion if the purpose of documentation is to create platforms for conversations between teachers and parents and allows sufficient time for both parties to clarify queries from the documentation. Having clear guidelines as such can also enable parents to adjust their own expectations towards documentation. There is a clear tension between the teachers' desire to fulfil their responsibility to teach and their requirement to document. In being able to understand the perspectives of parents, as evidenced in these findings, teachers can find strategies to address the information they need to know using methods beyond documentation. In this way, teachers can make space for meaningful pedagogical documentation, as it is "the engine bringing curriculum to life and creating places for decision-making, theory and practice" (Robertson, 2017, p. 114).

5.2. Reconceptualising documentation in EC settings – A model

The findings that emerged in this research indicate tensions between the practicalities of satisfying legal requirements and the importance of considering macro considerations in early childhood education from a long-term perspective. The ambiguities noted by (Livingstone & Hydon, 2019) in defining the concept of documentation and its purpose were affirmed in the present research. In attempting to move a step closer in defining the concept of documentation in the Singapore context, with reference to the findings in this research, the model proposed in Chapter 2 has been reconceptualised as indicated in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1. Continuum of documentation - Reconceptualised
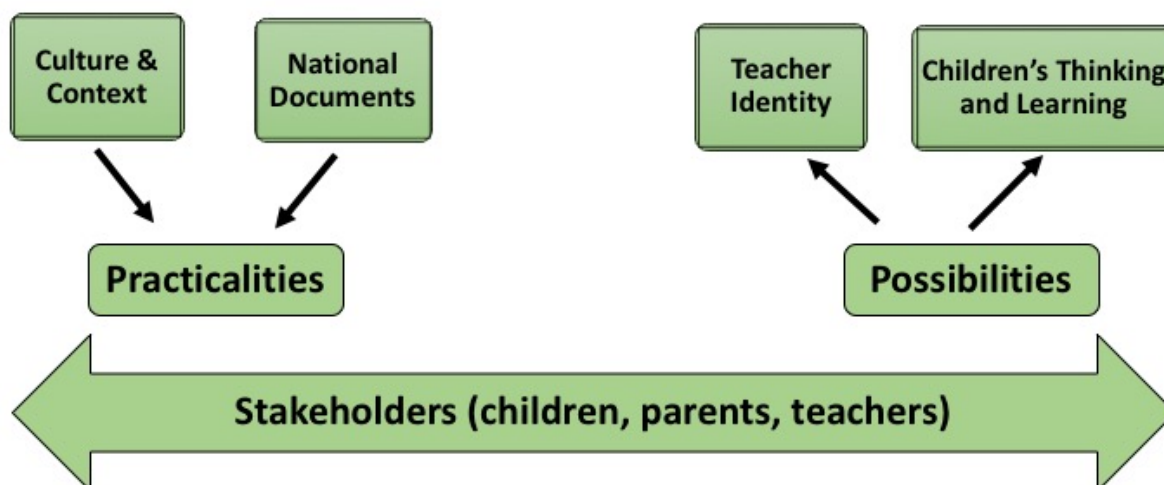
As can be seen, the documentation continuum from practicalities to possibilities is influenced by the engagement of parents, children and teachers in the documentation. Whilst this study was based on the perspectives of parents and teachers, the literature reviewed indicated that children's involvement can enrich documentation (Rintakorpi, 2016). This study also indicated that the factors influencing the practicalities are both of the culture and context of the EC setting and the family demographics they serve, and the requirements of the national documents. Lehrer et al. (2015) in their study on child care quality, also assert that parents as key stakeholders, should be included in the assessment of quality in EC settings and their perspectives, taken into consideration. Therefore, during the course of moving from practicalities to possibilities, the key stakeholders (parents, children and teachers) further shape how and what the documentation should contain and address. When documentation takes into account more than just the practicalities of compliance and is enriched by the voice of stakeholders, it will evolve and arrive at the stage of possibilities where it can inform the implementation of holistic assessments of children's learning and development as well as strengthen teachers' professional identity and status in the community.

5.3. Implications for policy and practice

Based on the analysis of findings and considering the available literature that has been reviewed for this thesis, this section outlines policy and practice implications for EC settings in Singapore.

Implications for practice. Inspired by Reggio Emilia practices, various scholars have reinforced the centrality of documentation in 'making learning visible' (Millikan & Giamminuti, 2014; Rinaldi, 2006, 2012). Both parents and teachers in this study affirmed the value of documentation and recognised it as a teacher responsibility. The teachers interviewed in this study also unanimously identified leaders of EC settings (principals or centre leaders) and teachers as those who would find this study relevant for influencing practice. Documentation practices within each EC setting differ based on the context of the setting as well as the demographics of its children, parents and staff. These differing aspects, in turn, will impact the relationship dynamics within settings. Documentation in EC settings is largely viewed as an essential component of the parents' experience in the EC setting (Reynolds & Duff, 2016), and this was affirmed in the present research. Whilst it is important to remember that parents were one of three main stakeholders, it is equally critical to uphold that one of the main purposes of documentation is its benefits for children's development and learning (Forman & Fyfe, 2012; Rintakorpi, 2016).

Emerson, Fear, Fox, and Sanders (2012) indicate that parent partnerships built with consideration for the demographics of the community and EC setting, will change ways in which communication and interactions established with parents beyond documentation. This way, documentation can be 'freed' to fulfil its intended purpose and as a process, not solely as a product. This will require a shift in thinking reflected in the mindset of both parents and the EC sector on the place of documentation in a child's experience of an EC setting. In order to achieve this shift, EC settings need to supplement documentation with other ways that can strengthen partnerships with parents. When parents experience partnership through diverse avenues and also get to know about their child's learning beyond the documentation they receive, their expectations of the documentation they receive will also change (Hadley & Rouse, 2018).

Implications for policy. Documentation is often a part of regulatory and national framework requirements (Picchio et al., 2014). In Singapore, it is addressed specifically in the NEL and SPARK. This creates a deep sense of responsibility for EC settings to ensure that they maintain

the necessary paperwork as evidence of compliance. Two teachers in this study for instance, identified the government agency of Singapore, the ECDA, as they acknowledged and recognised the importance of the changing towards the expectations about EC documentation, beginning at a policy or regulatory level. Considering the purpose of documentation, leaders and teachers in EC settings need to understand and discover the meaning of engaging in documentation beyond the fulfilment of the accreditation and regulatory requirements, and thereby shifting the focus onto children's learning and how teachers support learning (Livingstone & Hydon, 2019).

This approach is significantly different to reporting on achieved outcomes that may or may not directly reflect how the child has engaged in learning (Fleet et al., 2017a). When the national frameworks and accreditation system in Singapore re-define documentation with a focus on learning rather than solely on assessment, the latter which evidently comprises summative descriptions of demonstrated skills and knowledge, a shift in the mindset of the sector can take place to work towards more authentic quality practices. Based on the findings of the present research, documentation in its current use and presentation is a means to showcase only the ideal or is a measure of accountability towards their clients – the parents. Unfortunately, as noted by the teachers that were interviewed, this may be a prevalent practice in the sector, which does not demonstrate authenticity in the documentation that is recorded. This change in national frameworks will also require a change in pre-service teacher training and how teachers approach documentation and the parent-teacher partnership.

5.4. Suggestions for future research

The findings of this research contribute to a better understanding of what documentation is in the Singapore context. This baseline information can also serve as a platform for further research to be conducted on this phenomenon and its impact on teachers, parents and the sector as a whole. By undertaking longitudinal research, more in-depth research into parents' perspectives on documentation and teachers' practices, and their inter-relationship, will enable stronger associations to be made. Children should also be included in such research, as this will enable a triangulation of data of the three main stakeholders of documentation.

While the data collection period was challenged with time limitations, this small scoping study yielded a considerable number of responses from a diverse group of parents with children attending different EC settings around Singapore. Based on the literature reviewed, it can be said

that this is also the only study of its type on EC documentation carried out in this country. The survey responses made it clear that parents were keen to engage in the topic of documentation in EC settings. The demographic information collected within this study provided some basic information of the current generation of parents utilising EC settings. Participation by a broader cross-section of families and EC settings, can provide greater diversity of insights on parents' and teachers' perspectives of current practice and policy expectations. Importantly, any future research should consist of a balance of perspectives of stakeholders drawn from the various ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds representative of Singapore. Likewise, having both fathers and mothers represented within the study also enabled both these perspectives to be captured, as fathers and mothers both play key but different roles in the development of their child (Meuwissen & Carlson, 2015). Surveying both the father and mother of the same child can also provide understandings on how the same experience with documentation from the same EC setting can be received either in a similar or different way across these gender groups.

5.5. Conclusion

This scoping study has provided the basis on which to begin rethinking about and considering the practice of documentation within EC settings in Singapore. The findings highlighted some of the key perspectives that parents hold with regard to the documentation they received from their child's EC setting. The responses from parents were consistent and clear, to articulate their interest in being informed of their children's development and learning by the teachers. In this way documentation can provide the space for forming a relationship or/and a partnership between parents and teachers. However, the challenge is to further unpack the words, 'parent-teacher partnership', within the context of the Singapore EC system by considering what is important to the diverse communities and cultural backgrounds of the parents that EC settings are engaging with (Rouse & O'Brien, 2017). Equipped with a deeper understanding of the parent partnerships, EC settings will then be able to re-evaluate their existing strategies when engaging with children and their parents.

The findings provide the means of starting conversations about how EC documentation should and can be situated within the cultural and demographical contexts of EC settings in Singapore. The ability to document meaningfully, and to view documentation beyond the act of reporting and recording, will require a shift in the mindset of both EC practitioners and policymakers. These discussions can in turn, re-shape the teachers' pedagogical practices and

national policy on documentation. These possibilities also challenge EC teachers to reconsider their current practices and positioning of documentation within their everyday work as a teacher. This shift is necessary, as it redefines documentation in relation to the role of the teachers, inviting them to be vulnerable and critical of their own practices when working with children while assessing their learning, instead of seeing the two processes as separate. In order for this change to occur, multiple layers of support will be needed: leaders to mentor within the EC settings; professional development sessions; and pre-service modules to educate the next generation of teachers; as well as reinforcing this expectation through national frameworks and regulations. It is only through such a shift that teachers and leaders of EC settings will be able to advocate for the importance of preparing purposeful and authentic documentation within EC settings. There is much to explore and aspire to work towards, as the ideas surrounding EC documentation continue to evolve and influence EC teaching and learning.

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Appendix 1: Ethics approval

Dear Professor Waniganayake,

Re: "Documenting children's learning in Early Childhood Settings in Singapore - Parents' perspectives and teachers' reflections"(5201800061)

Thank you very much for your response. Your response has addressed the issues raised by the Faculty of Human Sciences Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee and approval has been granted, effective 15th March 2018. This email constitutes ethical approval only.

This approval is subject to the following condition:

1. Please forward the link and survey for records.

This research meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). The National Statement is available at the following web site:

https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/book/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research

The following personnel are authorised to conduct this research:

Professor Manjula Waniganayake
Dr Rebecca Andrews
Ms Yan Zhen Angela Chng

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

1.   The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

2.   Approval will be for a period of five (5) years subject to the provision of annual reports.

Progress Report 1 Due: 15th March 2019
Progress Report 2 Due: 15th March 2020
Progress Report 3 Due: 15th March 2021
Progress Report 4 Due: 15th March 2022
Final Report Due: 15th March 2023

NB. If you complete the work earlier than you had planned you must submit a Final Report as soon as the work is completed. If the project has been discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are also required to submit a Final Report for the project.

Progress reports and Final Reports are available at the following website:

https://www.mq.edu.au/research/ethics-integrity-and-policies/ethics/human-ethics/resources

3.   If the project has run for more than five (5) years you cannot renew approval for the project. You will need to complete and submit a Final Report and submit a new application for the project. (The five year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Sub-Committee to fully re-

review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).

4.   All amendments to the project must be reviewed and approved by the Sub-Committee before implementation. Please complete and submit a Request for Amendment Form available at the following website:

https://www.mq.edu.au/research/ethics-integrity-and-policies/ethics/human-ethics/resources

5.   Please notify the Sub-Committee immediately in the event of any adverse effects on participants or of any unforeseen events that affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

6.   At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your research in accordance with the guidelines established by the University. This information is available at the following websites:

https://www.mq.edu.au/research/ethics-integrity-and-policies/ethics/human-ethics/post-approval

https://www.mq.edu.au/research/ethics-integrity-and-policies/ethics/human-ethics/resources/research-ethics

If you will be applying for or have applied for internal or external funding for the above project it is your responsibility to provide the Macquarie University's Research Grants Management Assistant with a copy of this email as soon as possible. Internal and External funding agencies will not be informed that you have approval for your project and funds will not be released until the Research Grants Management Assistant has received a copy of this email.

If you need to provide a hard copy letter of approval to an external organisation as evidence that you have approval, please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Secretariat at the address below.

Please retain a copy of this email as this is your official notification of ethics approval.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Naomi Sweller
Chair
Faculty of Human Sciences
Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee

FHS Ethics

Faculty of Human Sciences Ethics
C5C-17 Wallys Walk L3
Macquarie University, NSW 2109, Australia
T: +61 2 9850 4197 | http://www.research.mq.edu.au/
Ethics Forms and Templates
https://www.mq.edu.au/research/ethics-integrity-and-policies/ethics/human-ethics/resources
The Faculty of Human Sciences acknowledges the traditional custodians of the Macquarie University Land,
the Wattamattageal clan of the Darug nation, whose cultures and customs have nurtured and continue to
nurture this land since the Dreamtime. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

CRICOS Provider Number 00002J. Think before you print.

Appendix 2: Information for interview participants

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

Faculty of Human Sciences
Macquarie University NSW 2109
T: +61 (2) 9850 9825
F: +61 (2) 9850 9890

MACQUARIE University
SYDNEY·AUSTRALIA

Appendix 2b - Information Brief for Teachers

Name of Study: **Documenting children's learning early childhood settings in Singapore – Parents perspectives and teachers' reflections** (HRE Ref No: 5201800061)

Name of Chief Investigator / Supervisor: Professor Manjula Waniganayake

You are invited to participate in a study investigating the documentation of children's learning and development that is currently occurring in early childhood settings in Singapore. Research-based evidence on documenting practices can assist the pedagogical practices of in the early childhood sector in Singapore. This study aims to address two key research questions within the context of the early childhood sector in Singapore as follows:
1. What are parents' perspectives of documentation of their children's learning in early childhood settings in Singapore?
2. How do early childhood professionals in Singapore reflect on parents' understandings of documentation they prepare?

The study is being conducted by a research student from Sydney – Ms Chng Yan Zhen Angela, to meet the requirements of her Master of Research at Macquarie University, Australia. This research will be under the supervision of Professor Manjula Waniganayake and Dr Rebecca Andrews from the Department of Educational Studies, Macquarie University. Their contact details are provided on this letter and the consent form.

There are two phases in this study:
Phase 1:   Survey with parents (with at least one child currently attending an early childhood setting) in Singapore
Phase 2:   Interviews with early childhood teachers (currently employed at an early childhood setting) in Singapore

You are invited to participate in Phase 2 of this study. This phase of the study is to explore research questions 2 above and is focusing on the participants reflection on the findings presented to them from survey phase of the study. This interview will take approximately 30-45 minutes to complete and the questions will be sent to the participants prior to the interview.

It is anticipated that the analysis of the findings will assist in uncovering existing patterns of perceptions of the documentation of children's learning currently occurring in Singapore. All data collected from the survey and interviews will be made accessible to the researcher and supervisor only.

A summary of the results of the study will be made available via email to participants of this study upon request. Please note that participation in this study:
- Is entirely voluntary and the participant is free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without consequence
- has no right or wrong answers in both the survey questionnaires and interviews
- is anonymous and that no individual will be identified in any publication or presentation based on this study.

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee (HRE Ref No: 5201800061).

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If you need further information or have concerns about this study, please email Professor Manjula Waniganayake. If you would like a response by telephone please provide your telephone number and Professor Waniganayake will call you back. If a response by email is sufficient, there is no need to provide your telephone number.

If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may also contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics & Integrity (telephone: +61 2 9850 7854; email: ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Your participation in this research is much appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Master of Research Candidate:
Ms Chng Yan Zhen Angela
angela.chng@students.mq.edu.au

Chief Investigator / Supervisor:
Professor Manjula Waniganayake
manjula.waniganayake@mq.edu.au

Co-Supervisor:
Dr Rebecca Andrews
rebecca.andrews@mq.edu.au

**Interview Consent Form for Teachers
(Participant's Copy)**

Name of Study: **Documenting children's learning early childhood settings in Singapore – Parents perspectives   and teachers' reflections** (HRE Ref No: 5201800061)

I have read the information provided and I am fully aware of the extent of my involvement in this research study. I understand that by signing this form I give consent to the named researchers to use information that I have shared in this research for the purposes of teaching and research work being undertaken by these researchers. This may include lectures and tutorials in pre-service teacher training programs as well as conference presentations, research grant applications and published papers. When discussing key findings and broad patterns my identity will be kept anonymous at all times. I am aware that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without giving a reason or any consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

This form can be completed electronically without printing – simply type in the spaces below.

Participant's Name: _____ (in BLOCK LETTERS)

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

(Please print name above if you do not have a digital signature)

Investigator's Name: _____ (in BLOCK LETTERS)

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

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If you need further information or have concerns about this study, please email Professor Manjula Waniganayake. If you would like a response by telephone please provide your telephone number and Professor Waniganayake will call you back. If a response by email is sufficient, there is no need to provide your telephone number.

If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may also contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics & Integrity (telephone: +612 9850 7854; email: ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Interview Consent Form for Teachers
(Investigator's Copy)

Name of Study: **Documenting children's learning early childhood settings in Singapore – Parents perspectives   and teachers' reflections** (HRE Ref No: 5201800061)

I have read the information provided and I am fully aware of the extent of my involvement in this research study. I understand that by signing this form I give consent to the named researchers to use information that I have shared in this research for the purposes of teaching and research work being undertaken by these researchers. This may include lectures and tutorials in pre-service teacher training programs as well as conference presentations, research grant applications and published papers. When discussing key findings and broad patterns my identity will be kept anonymous at all times. I am aware that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without giving a reason or any consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

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Participant's Name:		(in BLOCK LETTERS)
Participant's Signature:	Date:	
	(Please print name above if you do not have a digital signature)	
Investigator's Name:		(in BLOCK LETTERS)
Investigator's Signature:	Date:	

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee (HRE Ref No: 5201800061).
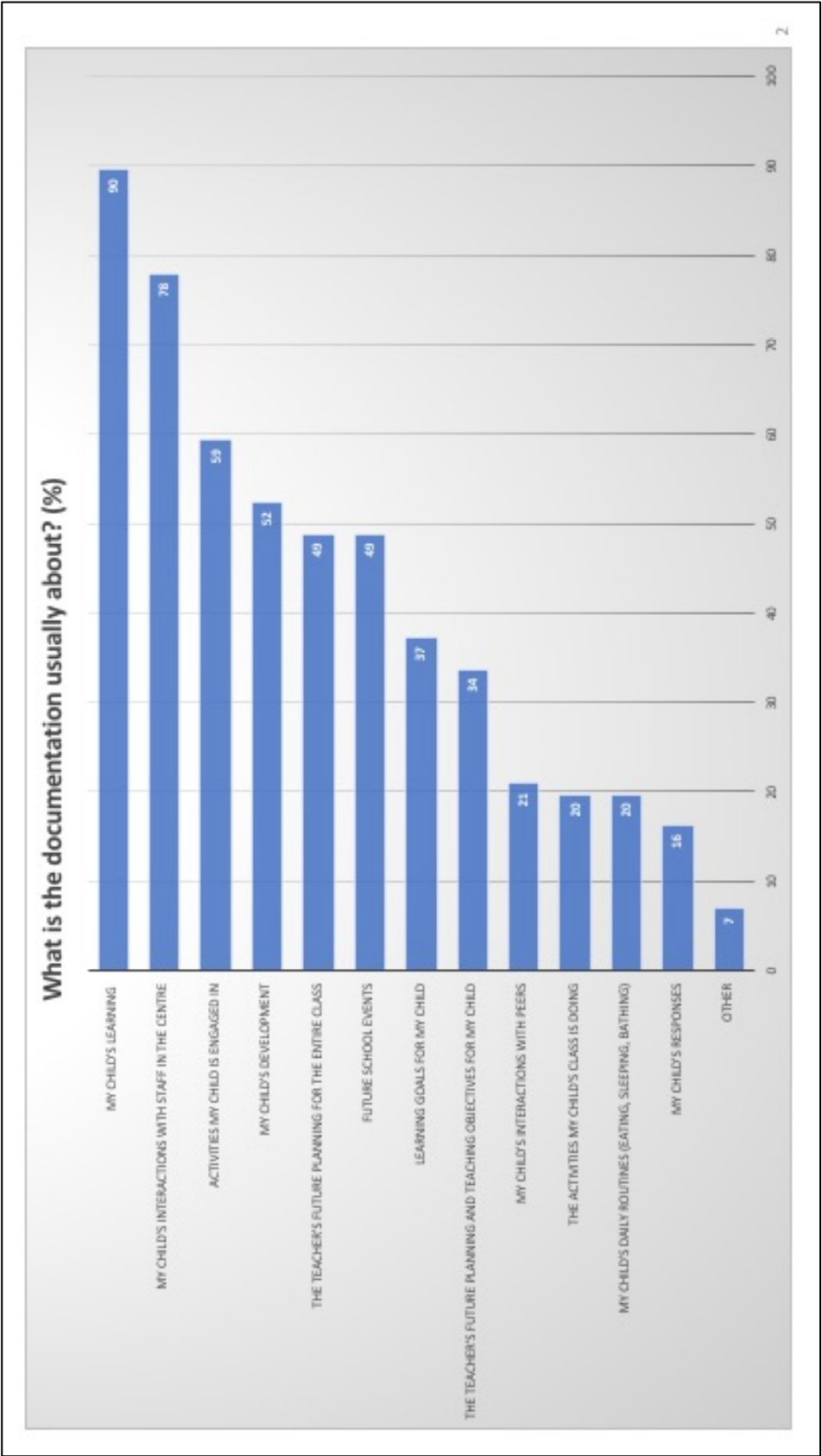
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Appendix 3: Phase two visuals (from survey)

What is the documentation usually about? (%)

Category	%
MY CHILD'S LEARNING	90
MY CHILD'S INTERACTIONS WITH STAFF IN THE CENTRE	78
ACTIVITIES MY CHILD IS ENGAGED IN	59
MY CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT	52
THE TEACHER'S FUTURE PLANNING FOR THE ENTIRE CLASS	49
FUTURE SCHOOL EVENTS	49
LEARNING GOALS FOR MY CHILD	37
THE TEACHER'S FUTURE PLANNING AND TEACHING OBJECTIVES FOR MY CHILD	34
MY CHILD'S INTERACTIONS WITH PEERS	21
THE ACTIVITIES MY CHILD'S CLASS IS DOING	20
MY CHILD'S DAILY ROUTINES (EATING, SLEEPING, BATHING)	20
MY CHILD'S RESPONSES	16
OTHER	7

What documentation do you receive from your child's teacher? (%)

Category	Value
Collection of work samples e.g. artwork, worksheets, craft	90
Photographs with brief descriptions/captions	76
Developmental reports / summaries of your child's learning and development	70
Newsletters	52
Observation records	49
Homework (work that must be handed in)	47
Home activities (work that is not handed in)	26
Learning stories	20
Classroom blogs	15
Photographs without descriptions	14
Checklists	13
Videos	12
Scrapbooks	8
Other	7
I do not receive any documentation	2

YES, because...

- "His teachers make the effort to keep track of the little things that my children do in school aside from their class activities."

- "I am able to know what my child learns in school and the developmental milestones he has achieved thus far."

- "I get to know what they learn in lessons, such as topics and/or skills. I also get to see how the activities are conducted."

- "Since she is in a full day childcare, I am able to keep track of at least her well-being in school through these documentation."

- "I know clearly what my child is learning, what my child is doing, and what my child is eating/or not eating every week."

NO, because...

- "The documentation shows the end result. I am more interested in the process of my child achieving that and the objective are the same."

- "There is hardly any feedback on how he does if it is not intentionally sought after."

- "Not mentioned if it was assisted or independent work."
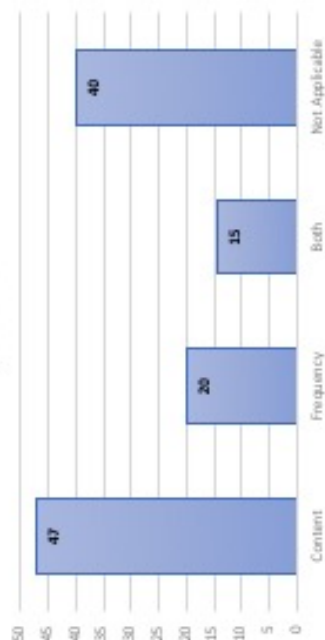
- "Not much info about my child."

Do you find the documentation you receive about your child informative?

91% Yes

9% No

- Yes
- No

YES, because...

- "There's a meet the parents session twice a year and teachers will update my child's learning progress through their daily observation. Most importantly, my **child is happy going to school and at this age, he is able to tell me what he did** in school. Hence documentation is somewhat secondary in my opinion."

- "To report **meaningful observation, time is needed. Once a term of 10 weeks is a good time frame** for such documentation."

- "It shows us of the **weekly/daily activities** of the learning and playing time."

- "Documents **various domains of development with pictures and explanation of the activities.**"

- "The childcare is **very detailed** about their documentation which is good in assuring me that my child is learning sufficiently, interacting well and enjoying class overall."

- "It is just enough for me to **stay connected with what my daughter is doing in** school and yet **not too much that I can keep up with.**"

- "There are **details** on sleep timing, food intake, whether or not she showered, how her mood was for the day, and **significant happenings for the day.**"

- "**Teacher is competent enough to provide info when necessary.**"

- "Allows me **enough information to meet the expectations** I mentioned earlier. Also I **would be concerned if too much documentation is provided, which means the teachers may have to spend alot of time preparing the** documentation, **at the expense of teaching my child well.**"
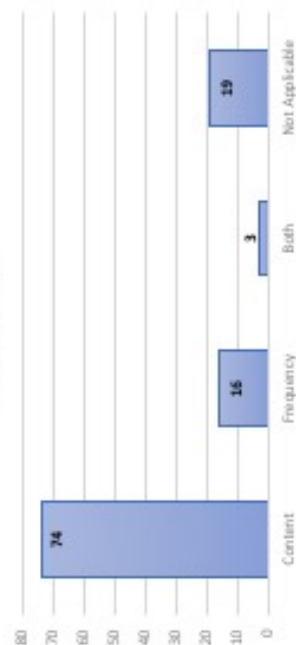
Do you find the documentation you receive about your child sufficient?

64% Yes
36% No

YES, because....

Content 47
Frequency 20
Both 15
Not Applicable 40

No, because . . .

- "Sometimes I wonder if the photos are staged – but more importantly is the child's actual response at home and description of her activities at school."

- "It is more on how she is doing academically but not a lot on her social interaction and how she responds to teachers."

- "I am not really able to gauge her academic skills from the activities photos."

- "It doesn't specify what learning objective this activity has and if my child has attain that skill, it is merely a description of the activity my child is doing."

- "I hope to receive documentations that is more child specific rather than activities done as a class or as a school."

- "Not specific, general class update."

- "The documentation just showed the end result."

- "Only the ticks on the eating routine , no any words comments about my child's activities."

- "It doesn't seem personal enough. Looks more like a template they give all parents."

- "It says what the teacher wants to focus on - not necessarily what is important to the parents or find a point for parents & teachers to work together on."

- "Would be good if parents were given some tips on how to engage their child too, in line with the activities they do in school."

Do you find the documentation you receive about your child sufficient?

Yes 64%
No 36%

NO, because...

Content 74
Frequency 16
Both 3
Not Applicable 19

Why would like to receive documentation about their child?

It keeps me INFORMED

- "To be made aware of his progress"
- "To **know** what is going on"
- "In a way to **understand more** about my child cooping in school."
- "As it is a quick drop off and pick up everyday we don't really get to **have a proper chat with the teacher** or see her just to find out how our child is doing. I think especially if my child is in the younger age group. I would like to **know more since she is so young**. So having more **regular updates** as well as pics or videos I get to have a **better perspective** of how my child is doing in school."

It is a measure of ACCOUNTABILITY

- "So I would understand if the school **curriculum is helping my kid**."
- "**It assures me as a parent**."
- "So that we can **see the child developments and how school indeed allows child to grow**."
- "So I know **my child is properly observed and assessed**."

It builds PARENT-TEACHER partnership

- "Enable **communicate** between Teachers and parents."
- "**Home-school partnership** is important in children's learning and development. It benefits both sides."
- "To **work closely with teachers** on the area of concerns."

It enables me to take ACTION

- "... sometimes that provides a **discussion topic with the child**."
- "Allows me to **monitor his learning progress and support his learning** at home, by reinforcing what was being taught in school. Also shows my child that I am interested in what he is learning in school and want to know more about what he does in school."
- "... **to help enhance their knowledge** with appropriate learnings outside school. **To praise and reward them** when they excel."
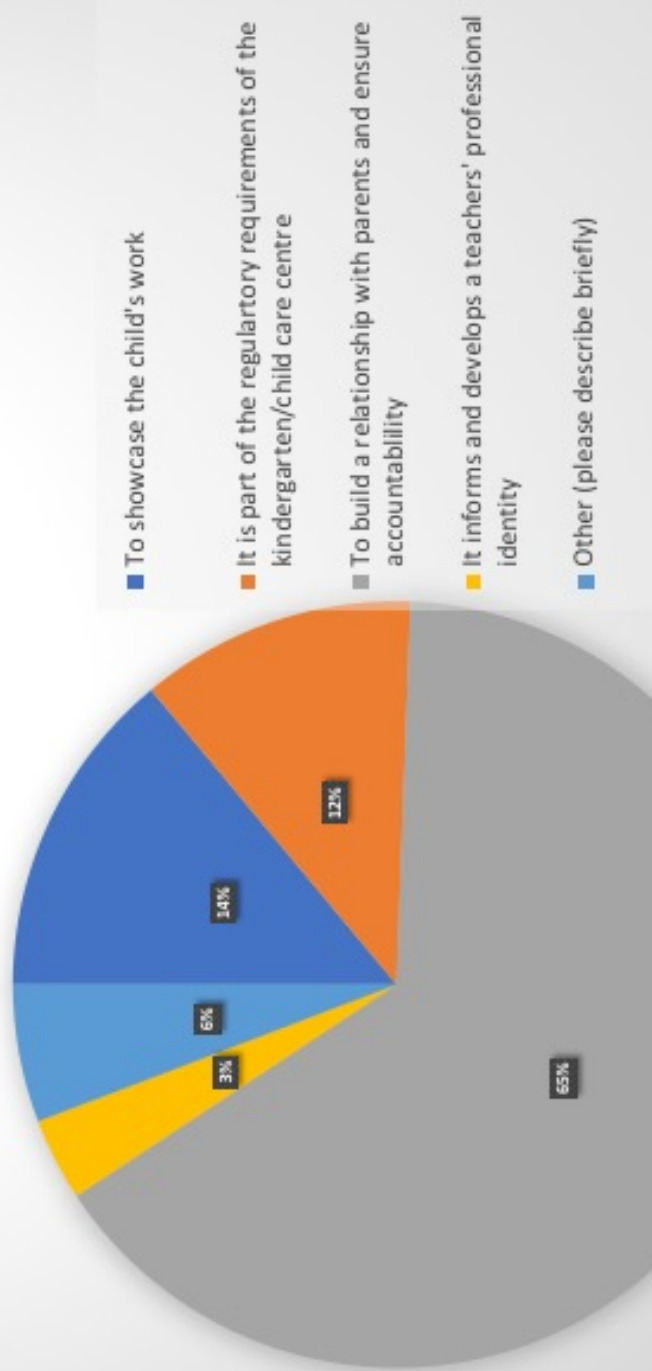
It is a MEMORY

- "**Memories for child** as they grow older"
- "... **gives me fond memories** of my child growing years."
- "... photos are more for **memory sake** especially since this is her first time in school(K1)."

What do you think is the main reason for early childhood teachers' use of documentations of children?

Legend:
- To showcase the child's work
- It is part of the regulartory requirements of the kindergarten/child care centre
- To build a relationship with parents and ensure accountabillity
- It informs and develops a teachers' professional identity
- Other (please describe briefly)

Pie chart values: 65%, 14%, 12%, 6%, 3%

How important is teachers' documentation in your selection of your child's early childhood setting? (%)

How important is the teacher's documentation of your child in your overall experience of the early childhood setting? (%)

Appendix 4: Phase two interview questions
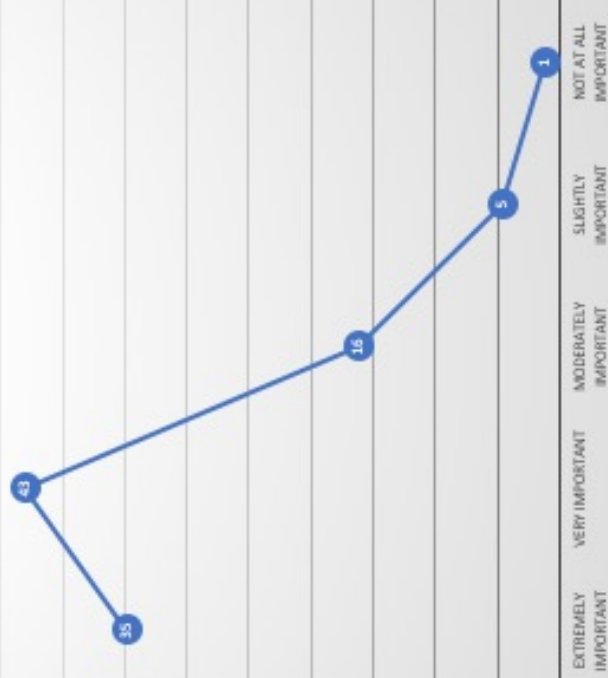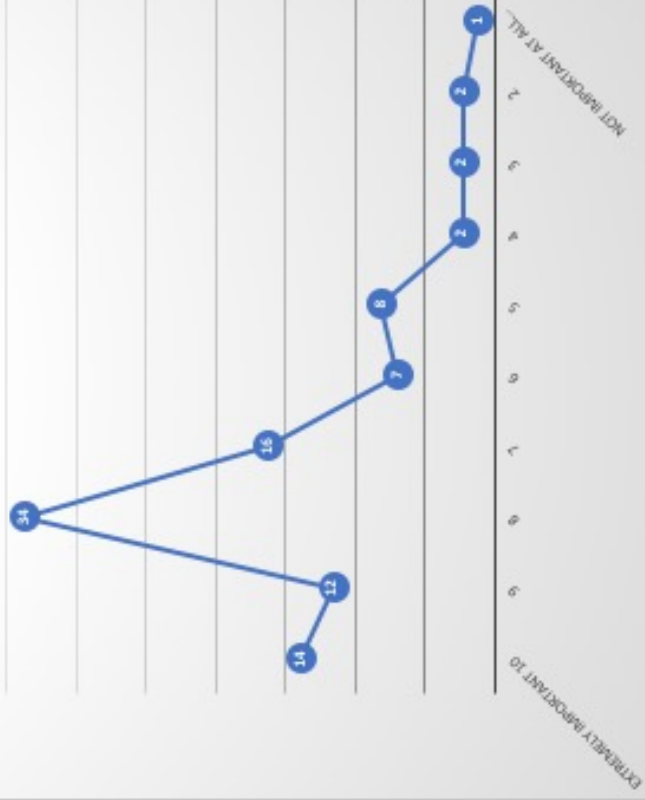
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Name of Study: **Documenting children's learning early childhood settings in Singapore – Parents perspectives and teachers' reflections** (HRE Ref No: 5201800061)

Demographical information

What ethnic group do you identify with?
What is your highest qualification?
What type of early childhood setting do you work in?
How many years of experience do you have in the sector?
Which is the closet MRT station to the early childhood setting you work in?
Which classroom/age group are you teaching at the moment?

Slide no	Interview question
	1. **What documentation do you provide families?**
2, 3	(show VISUALS to participant)
	This first bar chart shows parents' responses to the question 'what documentation do you receive from your child's teacher?'.
	Parents were allowed to select all the answers that apply.
	The most common documentation were xx, xx, xx
	The least common were xx, xx, xx
	This second bar chart shows parents' responses to the question 'what is the documentation usually about?'
	The most common documentation were xx, xx, xx
	The least common were xx, xx, xx
	2. **(a) Looking at the data, what are your immediate thoughts?** **(b) Did any aspect surprise or interest you? Why?** **(c) When you do documentation, what do you usually try to focus on?**

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4	When asked **"Do you find the documentation you receive about your child, informative**, the 91% of parents in this study replied yes and 9% said no (show VISUALS to participant). They were asked to elaborate on their choice. Here are some examples. **3.** **(a) What do you think about this finding and the parents' comments?** **(b) Did any aspect of this finding surprise or interest you? Why?**
5, 6	The parents were asked, **'do you find the documentation you receive about your child sufficient?'** The majority of parents in this study replied 'yes' (show VISUALS to participant). They were asked to explain their choice. These comments were further analysed and categorised. 47% referred to the content of the documentation 20% to the frequency 15% to both The parents who answered no were also asked why. Majority of them (74%) made comments with regards to the content. **4.** **(a) What are your thoughts after looking at these parents' responses?** **(b) Does this data seem representative of parents in your workplace?**

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7	When asked 'why would you like to receive documentation about your child?' There were some interesting responses. (show VISUALS to participant)
	I categorised them into 5 categories.
	They are:
	It keeps me informed
	It is a measure of accountability
	It builds parent-teacher partnership
	It enables me to take action
	It is a memory
	I was especially intrigued by the comments especially the ones in the category on memory.
	5. (a) What do you think of these responses?
	(b) Did you expect parents to respond in this manner? Why or why not?
8	Most parents think the main reason for EC teachers' use the documentations of child is to build relationships with parents and ensure accountability. (show VISUALS to participant) The smallest percentage said, it informs and develops a teacher's professional identity.
	6. What are your thoughts about this?
	7. As a teacher, which answer would you pick?
9	A majority of parents indicated that documentation is important in their overall experience of the early childhood setting. On a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being extremely important, most voted 8 when asked "how important is teachers' documentation in their selection of an early childhood setting". (show VISUALS to participant)
	8. (a) What are your thoughts about this?
	(b) Does it coincide with your experience? Why or why not?

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-	**9.** **(a) Which of these findings interests you the most?** **(b) Overall, do the findings of this survey coincide or differ with how you approach and view documentation?**
-	**10. Who do you think would find the survey results useful?** If there is no response or the participant is struggling to respond ask this question: For instance, would YOU use this study to inform your future practice? What about others? Your organization? Your principal?
-	**11. Do you have any further comments about the data?**

Appendix 5: Information for survey participants

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Appendix 1a - Information Brief for Parents

<u>Name of Study</u>: Documenting children's learning early childhood settings in Singapore – Parents perspectives and teachers' reflections

<u>Name of Chief Investigator / Supervisor</u>: Professor Manjula Waniganayake

You are invited to participate in a study investigating the documentation of children's learning and development that is currently occurring in early childhood settings in Singapore. Research-based evidence on documenting practices can assist the pedagogical practices of in the early childhood sector in Singapore. This study aims to address two key research questions within the context of the early childhood sector in Singapore as follows:

1. What are parents' perspectives of documentation of their children's learning in early childhood settings in Singapore?
2. How do early childhood professionals in Singapore reflect on parents' understandings of documentation they prepare?

The study is being conducted by a research student from Sydney – Ms Chng Yan Zhen Angela, to meet the requirements of her Master of Research at Macquarie University, Australia. This research will be under the supervision of Professor Manjula Waniganayake from the Department of Educational Studies, Macquarie University. Their contact details are provided on this letter and the consent form.

There are two phases in this study:
Phase 1:   Survey with parents (with at least one child currently attending an early childhood setting) in Singapore
Phase 2:   Interviews with early childhood teachers (currently employed at an early childhood setting) in Singapore

You are invited to participate in Phase 1 of this study. This phase will comprise parents (with at least one child currently attending an early childhood setting). Participants are invited to complete a survey on their perspectives and experiences of documentation of their child's learning and development. This survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

Participants completing the survey will be invited to self-nominate to enter a draw for a $20 gift voucher at the end of the survey. Winners of the draw will be contacted via the email provided. Only participants who wish to enter the draw will be required to provide their email address for winner notification purposes.

It is anticipated that the analysis of the findings will assist in uncovering existing patterns of perceptions of the documentation of children's learning currently occurring in Singapore. All data collected from the survey and interviews will be made accessible to the researcher and supervisor only.

A summary of the results of the study will be made available via email to participants of this study upon request. Please note that participation in this study:
- Is entirely voluntary and the participant is free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without consequence
- has no right or wrong answers in both the survey questionnaires and interviews
- is anonymous and that no individual will be identified in any publication or presentation based on this study.

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The Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee has approved the ethical aspects of this study. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics (telephone +61 2 9850 7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Your participation in this research is much appreciated. Feel free to contact us if you have any questions about your involvement in this study.

Yours sincerely

Master of Research Candidate: Chief Investigator / Supervisor:
Ms Chng Yan Zhen Angela   Professor Manjula Waniganayake
angela.chng@students.mq.edu.au   manjula.waniganayake@mq.edu.au

www.mq.edu.au

Phase 1: Online Survey Consent Form for Parents
(Instructions provided at the gateway to the survey website)

Name of Study: Documenting children's learning early childhood settings in Singapore – Parents perspectives and teachers' reflections (Ethics Reference No: xxxx)

By completing part or all of this survey, you have consented to participating in Phase 1 of this study.
Click Next to begin the survey.

Your participation in this research is much appreciated. Feel free to contact us if you have any questions about your involvement in this study.

Yours sincerely

Master of Research Candidate: Principal Supervisor:
Ms Chng Yan Zhen Angela   Professor Manjula Waniganayake
Email: angela.chng@students.mq.edu.au   Email: manjula.waniganayake@mq.edu.au

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Appendix 6: Phase one survey questions

> **Q. Click next if you have at least one child <u>currently</u> attending an early childhood setting (infant care, child care or kindergarten).**
>
> **Q. What is your relationship with the child?**
>
> ○ Father
>
> ○ Mother
>
> ○ Other: _____
>
> **Q. What is your highest educational qualification?**
>
> ○ Primary
>
> ○ GCE 'O' Levels
>
> ○ GCE 'A' Levels
>
> ○ Certificate
>
> ○ Diploma
>
> ○ Bachelor Degree
>
> ○ Masters
>
> ○ PhD
>
> ○ Other _____
>
> **Q. Your ethnicity (cultural group that you identify with) is:**
>
> ○ Chinese
>
> ○ Malay
>
> ○ Indian
>
> ○ Eurasian
>
> ○ Other _____
>
> **Q. Is this your first child attending an early childhood setting?**
>
> ○ Yes
>
> ○ No
>
> Page 1 of 7

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Q. What type of early childhood setting does your child attend?

○ Infant care (half day)

○ Infant care (full day)

○ Child care (half day)

○ Child care (full day)

○ Kindergarten

○ Other _____

Q. Which classroom/age group does your child belong to?

○ under 18 mths

○ 18-24 mths

○ 24-36 mths

○ 3-4 years

○ 4-5 years

○ 5-6 years

Q. Which is the closest MRT station to the early childhood setting your child attends?

Q. What documentation do you receive from your child's teacher? (select all that apply)

- ☐ Photographs with brief descriptions/captions
- ☐ Newsletters
- ☐ Classroom blogs
- ☐ Scrapbooks
- ☐ Photographs without descriptions
- ☐ Collection of work samples e.g. artwork, worksheets, craft
- ☐ Learning stories
- ☐ Observation records
- ☐ Developmental reports / summaries of your child's learning and development
- ☐ Checklists
- ☐ Homework (work that must be handed in)
- ☐ Home activities (work that is not handed in)
- ☐ I do not receive any documentation
- ☐ Videos
- ☐ Other _____

Q. How do you receive documentation about your child from your child's early childhood setting?

- ○ Printed copy
- ○ Electronic copy
- ○ Both
- ○ I do not receive any documentation
- ○ Other _____

Q. Do you find the documentation you receive about your child informative?

○ Yes

○ No

In what ways?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q. Does your child's early childhood setting use social media to document and communicate your child's learning with you?

○ Yes. Please specify (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc)

_____

○ No

Q. What is the documentation usually about? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ Learning goals for my child
- ☐ My child's learning
- ☐ Activities my child is engaged in
- ☐ My child's responses
- ☐ The teacher's future planning and teaching objectives for my child
- ☐ My child's interactions with staff in the centre
- ☐ The activities my child's class is doing
- ☐ The teacher's future planning for the entire class
- ☐ My child's interactions with peers
- ☐ My child's daily routines (eating, sleeping, bathing)
- ☐ My child's development
- ☐ Future school events
- ☐ Other _____

Q. What do you think is the main reason for early childhood teachers' use of documentations of children?

- ○ To showcase the child's work
- ○ It is part of the regulartory requirements of the kindergarten/child care centre
- ○ To build a relationship with parents and ensure accountablility
- ○ It informs and develops a teachers' professional identity
- ○ Other (please describe briefly) _____

Q. How does the teachers' documentation help you to understand your child's development and learning? Please explain briefly.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q. How important is the teacher's documentation of your child in your overall experience of the early childhood setting?

○ Not at all important

○ Slightly important

○ Moderately important

○ Very important

○ Extremely important

Q. How often do you receive written documentation about your child?

○ Daily

○ Weekly

○ Once a term

○ Once a year

○ Other: _____

Q. What would you like teachers to document about your child?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q. Do you think the documentation you receive about your child is regular enough?

○ Yes

○ No, it is too regular. Please specify what is ideal for you:
_____

○ No, it is not regular enough. Please specify what is ideal for you:
_____

Q. Do you find the documentation you receive about your child sufficient?

○ Yes

○ No

Why?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q. How important is teachers' documentation in your selection of your child's early childhood setting? (0 = Not important at all, 10 = Extremely important)

Not important at all   Extremely important

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q. Please indicate 'agree' or 'disagree' to these statements below:

	Agree	Disagree
Documentation supports teachers in their teaching.	○	○
Documentation enables parents to know their child better.	○	○
Documentation gives children the opportunity to voice their learning.	○	○
Documentation is an important indicator whether a kindergarten/child care centre is doing a good job educating children.	○	○
Documentation enables teachers to engage parents in enhancing children's development and learning	○	○

Q. Why would you like to receive documentation about your child?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q. Would you like a chance to win a voucher?
Your survey responses will not be linked to the details you provide for this draw.

○ Yes

○ No

Q. Click on the link to enter your email for the draw.
https://mqedu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2nHcboeDAhmefS5

Appendix 7: Singapore Mass Rapid Transit (SMRT) train stations map