A logo of a university

Description automatically generated

Parents’ values and children’s academic achievements: Hong Kong parents’ choices of early childhood education.

**Thamara Bulmer**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of:

Doctor of Education

The University of Sheffield

Faculty of Social Sciences

School of Education

October 2024

*‘Some children are orchids, and some children are dandelions’*

*(Parent participant, 2020)*

# Abstract.

This research contributes to the body of knowledge on values held by parents and teachers in Hong Kong and looks at the impact these values have on parental choices regarding kindergarten choices for their children. The research confirms the agreement on most values held by parents and teachers in a globally constructed value system within Hong Kong considering historical Confucian values and more recently, in a historical context, shared western values. The research further includes the context of values as discussed in literature, and the reality experienced from the viewpoint of parents and teachers regarding these values.  Values highlighted by participants in the study were honesty, respect, being a good friend, as well as having an enjoyment for learning, and wider social and personal values.

The rationale of this study was to examine if there was a disconnect between the concept of academic attainment in Hong Kong early years education, which is prioritised in research literature, and the findings of this study. What emerged from these findings shows that teachers and parents of children in Hong Kong hold stronger feelings towards other features of learning and development, rather than academic attainment.

The study used a mixed method approach. The data used to gain a thematic analysis came from the views of 66 teachers and 38 parents, which were obtained via questionnaires and from 6 parents who took part in one-to-one interviews, which were carried out online. The findings suggest that the values highlighted by the teachers and the parents in both sets of questionnaires and interviews correlate with each other, however this offers a different perspective with the literature explored within this thesis.

The study is a small-scale study and therefore we cannot generalise the data, however this study reflects and shares that parents have two main choices to make regarding their child’s education, do they choose personal values or academic values for their children’s future? This study has found that choices made by parents for their children are strongly related to Confucian and Hong Kong cultural principles of gaining knowledge and the belief that culturally academic attainment is seen as more important than personal values. This study has presented valuable information which can give insight into the values of parents and how these can be incorporated within the early years education systems in Hong Kong to enable parents to make different choices for their children.

**Acknowledgements.**

Firstly, I would like to thank the two universities which made it possible for me to undertake this study. The University of Sheffield and the University of Hull who have both contributed in different ways to support me. The University of Sheffield teaching team, who gave me some very valuable insights and support throughout this journey and the University of Hull for their financial support, encouragement, and time.

I want to thank my personal supervisors, Emma Pearson for her unwavering belief in me and her encouragement, support, and gentle feedback throughout the first part of the process. Cathy Nutbrown and Tim Herrick who guided me through the last stages of this journey and made sure the ‘wheels didn’t come off altogether.’

My friends and colleagues at work who have kept me going and have kept me grounded in the process, who have listened to my high and low points throughout this process and kept encouraging me, and finally my husband and children who always believed I could do it, even if at times I didn’t believe it myself.

Without all of you I would not have arrived at this point.

# 

# Table of Contents.

**Abstract.**

**Acknowledgements.**

**Appendices.**

**Table of contents.**

**Figures, Boxes and Tables**.

[Abstract. 1](#_Toc180154731)

[Table of Contents. 1](#_Toc180154732)

[Figures, Boxes and Tables. 6](#_Toc180154733)

[Chapter 1: Introduction to the Hong Kong parental values study. 1](#_Toc180154734)

[1. Introduction and statement of rationale for the study reported in this thesis. 1](#_Toc180154735)

[1.1 Statement of rationale for the study reported in this thesis. 1](#_Toc180154736)

[1.2 Introduction. 2](#_Toc180154737)

[1.2.1 Early childhood pedagogies and how these relate to pedagogical practice in Hong Kong practice. 3](#_Toc180154738)

[1.2.2 My philosophical stance. 4](#_Toc180154739)

[1.3 Research interest and my positionality. 5](#_Toc180154740)

[1.4 My positionality within the Hong Kong context. 7](#_Toc180154741)

[1.5 The research process and impact of political unrest. 10](#_Toc180154742)

[1.6 Background to the research context. 11](#_Toc180154743)

[1.7 Context for the study: a Hong Kong educational history synopsis. 12](#_Toc180154744)

[1.7.1 The Hong Kong Early Childhood Education system. 13](#_Toc180154745)

[1.7.2 Reform of the Hong Kong Education system. 15](#_Toc180154746)

[1.8 Impact of the voucher system of ECE funding in Hong Kong. 16](#_Toc180154747)

[1.8.1 Raising Quality of Education in Hong Kong. 18](#_Toc180154748)

[1.9 Impact of values on pre-school choices parents make. 23](#_Toc180154749)

[1.9.1 Parental choice impact. 24](#_Toc180154750)

[1.10 Research aims and research questions. 28](#_Toc180154751)

[1.10.1 Research sub-questions. 28](#_Toc180154752)

[1.11 Organisation and context of the thesis. 29](#_Toc180154753)

[Chapter 2: Literature Review. 32](#_Toc180154754)

[2.1 Introduction. 32](#_Toc180154755)

[2.1.1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria. 32](#_Toc180154756)

[2.2 The impact of the historical context of Hong Kong. 33](#_Toc180154757)

[2.2.1 Impact of migration on Hong Kong values. 34](#_Toc180154758)

[2.2.2 The impact of historical Confucian values. 35](#_Toc180154759)

[2.2.3 The interregnum of governmental reign. 37](#_Toc180154760)

[2.3 Shared understanding of wider values. 38](#_Toc180154761)

[2.4 Global perspectives on parental values. 40](#_Toc180154762)

[2.5 Parental values and early education systems. 42](#_Toc180154763)

[2.6 Competitive nature of ECE in Hong Kong. 43](#_Toc180154764)

[2.7 Cultural values, and the influx of western values in Hong Kong. 47](#_Toc180154765)

[2.7.1 Educational practices and the impact of the wider cultural influx. 48](#_Toc180154766)

[2.8 Global Values and Hong Kong interpreted values. 50](#_Toc180154767)

[2.8.1 Confucian values. 53](#_Toc180154768)

[2.8.2 Main Confucian principles. 54](#_Toc180154769)

[2.9 Chapter Summary. 57](#_Toc180154770)

[Chapter 3: Research methods and methodology. 59](#_Toc180154771)

[3.1 Introduction. 59](#_Toc180154772)

[3.1.1 Context and location of the study. 61](#_Toc180154773)

[3.1.2 Participants in the study. 62](#_Toc180154774)

[3.1.3. Chosen methods of gathering data. 63](#_Toc180154775)

[3.2 Rationale for the qualitative methods. 63](#_Toc180154776)

[3.2.1 Qualitative methods. 65](#_Toc180154777)

[3.3 Theoretical approaches underpinning the thesis. 67](#_Toc180154778)

[3.3.1 Socio-cultural theory.   68](#_Toc180154779)

[3.3.2 Bio-ecological theory. 70](#_Toc180154780)

[3.4 Ethical issues and informed consent. 73](#_Toc180154781)

[3.4.1 Building relationships, power imbalance and participants. 77](#_Toc180154782)

[3.4.2 Voice of participants. 79](#_Toc180154783)

[3.5 The pilot study and lessons learnt. 81](#_Toc180154784)

[3.5.1 Parent questionnaire pilot study. 81](#_Toc180154785)

[3.5.2 Challenges and changes arising from the pilot study. 82](#_Toc180154786)

[3.6 Research process. 83](#_Toc180154787)

[3.7 Research methods. 87](#_Toc180154788)

[3.7.1 Questionnaires and participants. 88](#_Toc180154789)

[3.7.2. Teacher questionnaires.  89](#_Toc180154790)

[3.7.3. Parent questionnaires.   90](#_Toc180154791)

[3.7.4. Interviews undertaken with parents. 92](#_Toc180154792)

[3.8 Generalisability. 95](#_Toc180154793)

[3.9 Issues of Bias. 95](#_Toc180154794)

[3.10 Data analysis. 97](#_Toc180154795)

[Chapter 4 Analysis of data and themes. 104](#_Toc180154796)

[4.1 Structural discourses of parents and teachers. 104](#_Toc180154797)

[4.2 Cultural legacies. 107](#_Toc180154798)

[4.3 Voices of the participants. 109](#_Toc180154799)

[4.4 Teacher questionnaires. 110](#_Toc180154800)

[4.5 Parent/carer questionnaires. 123](#_Toc180154801)

[4.6 Parental Illustrative stories. 128](#_Toc180154802)

[4.7 Parents’ stories and themes. 129](#_Toc180154803)

[4.7.1 Parental background. 130](#_Toc180154804)

[4.7.2 Themes discussed by the parent participants. 133](#_Toc180154805)

[4.7.2 a Chinese language and culture. 133](#_Toc180154806)

[4.7.2 b Academic approaches. 135](#_Toc180154807)

[4.7.2 c Choice of kindergarten. 139](#_Toc180154808)

[4.7.2 d Multicultural inclusivity and acceptance. 142](#_Toc180154809)

[4.7.2 e Curriculum and kindergarten interviews. 145](#_Toc180154810)

[4.7.2 f Social skills. 148](#_Toc180154811)

[4.7.2 g Observations by parents. 151](#_Toc180154812)

[Chapter 5: Consideration of themes. 156](#_Toc180154813)

[5.1 Key themes. 157](#_Toc180154814)

[5.2 Academic values. 160](#_Toc180154815)

[5.3 Curriculum in the kindergarten. 165](#_Toc180154816)

[5.4 Cultural and heritage values. 168](#_Toc180154817)

[5.5 Social and personal skills. 175](#_Toc180154818)

[5.6 Minority theme. 178](#_Toc180154819)

[5.6.1 The value of play. 179](#_Toc180154820)

[5.7 Discussion. 181](#_Toc180154821)

[5.7.1 Parental values in general, and specific in Hong Kong. 183](#_Toc180154822)

[5.7.2 Were there any wider aspects which impacted on values displayed by the participants from both groups? 184](#_Toc180154823)

[5.7.3 What values do teachers hold in Hong Kong in early years settings? 185](#_Toc180154824)

[5.7.4 Do the values of parents and teachers match or are there clear divisions? 186](#_Toc180154825)

[5.8 Chapter summary. 187](#_Toc180154826)

[Chapter 6 Conclusions, Reflections and Recommendations. 189](#_Toc180154827)

[6.1 The aims of the study. 189](#_Toc180154828)

[6.2 Conclusions and recommendations. 189](#_Toc180154829)

[6.3 Limitations. 191](#_Toc180154830)

[6.4 Looking to the future - Contribution to knowledge. 192](#_Toc180154831)

[6.5 A synopsis of my overall argument and thoughts: 194](#_Toc180154832)

[6.6 Reflection on the process, my learning journey. 195](#_Toc180154833)

[6.7 A closing remark. 200](#_Toc180154834)

[References. 201](#_Toc180154835)

[Appendices 254](#_Toc180154836)

**Appendices.**

Appendix 1: Ethical Application and Ethical Approval letter

Appendix 2 a: Information sheet for parents.

Appendix 2 b: Information sheet for Teachers.

Appendix 3: Consent sheet Parents questionnaires.

Appendix 4: Consent sheet Teacher questionnaires.

Appendix 5: Parent Interview consent form.

Appendix 6: Script with interview questions.

Appendix 7: Teacher questionnaire questions.

Appendix 7.1 a. Figure 1 a question 1 results

Appendix 7.1 b. Top ten most mentioned results

Appendix 7.2 a. Which values do you deem Confucian values?

Appendix 7.2 b. Top ten answers

Appendix 7.3 a. Which values do you deem to be western values.

Appendix 7.3 b. Top ten answers

Appendix 7.4 a. What values do you think parents want you to teach their children

Appendix 7.4 b. Top ten answers

Appendix 7.4 c. Overall findings of question 6

Appendix 8 a. Parent questionnaire questions.

Appendix 8 b. How did you choose the kindergarten your child attends?

Appendix 8 c. What values do you want the kindergarten/ nursery to teach your child?

Appendix 8 d. Which of the following values do you find important for your child?

Appendix 8 e. How far do you travel to take your child to kindergarten/nursery?

Appendix 9 a. Example of part of one of the interviews with initial colour coding

Appendix 9 b to g Transcripts of interviews

Appendix 10. Further collated findings from interviews.

# Figures, Boxes and Tables.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Table of figures page | |
| Figure 1. Hong Kong’s Education Landscape | 17 |
| Figure 2. Number of schools by sector 20121/2022 | 18 |
| Figure 3. Bronfenbrenner bio-ecological system graph. | 71 |
| Figure 4. Key themes. | 159 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Table of boxes page | |
| Box 1. Experiential perspective on kindergarten visit. | 60 |
| Box 2. Story of the Zodiac calendar. | 108 |
| Box 3. Which of the following values do you find important for your child? | 126 |
| Box 4. Overview of participants and how they are indicated in the next section. | 159 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Table of tables page | |
| Table 1. Overview of study dates and data collection. | 85-86 |
| Table 2. Demographics of participants | 105 |
| Table 3. Participants and timescale of data collection. | 106 |
| Table 4. Overview of question 6 links to themes | 120-123 |
| Table 5. Overview of the most mentioned values | 125 |

# Chapter 1: Introduction to the Hong Kong parental values study.

# Introduction and statement of rationale for the study reported in this thesis.

This Thesis explores parental values and their impact on choices parents (the mother or father of the child, or in some cases the carer taking on a parental role for the child) make for their children. The study is situated within Hong Kong during the timespan of June 2019 to March 2021. This introductory chapter will give an overview of the rationale and the topics which will be discussed in further detail throughout the thesis.

# 1.1 Statement of rationale for the study reported in this thesis.

The objective and rationale of this qualitative research study is to gain wider understanding regarding parental choices in a childcare setting in Hong Kong for their child. This study asks:How do values associated with academic achievement influence the choices Hong Kong parents make about early childhood provision? I will therefore start to explore if parental choices are based on academic values, or if parents are influenced by different values for their child. There is a gap in literature whereby parental values in Hong Kong are not taken into account when making choices for their children. There is an overall assumption in the Hong Kong literature that academic values are seen as the most important aspect for choices made by parents, however this thesis is addressing new knowledge to gain wider understanding of parental values and if these values are reflected by teachers within kindergartens within Hong Kong. By gaining wider understanding of the values parents hold for their children, kindergartens can ensure they include these values in their daily practices and to start making a shift away from a purely academic approach as is discussed in current literature (Lee, 2014; Jensen, 2013; Hogan, 2014).

# 1.2 Introduction.

This introductory chapter is divided into subsections. It begins with a discussion of my research interest and my positionality and how my own background impacts the research I undertook (1.3). The chapter next looks at my positionality within the Hong Kong context (1.4), as my previous lecturing role and the visits I undertook within Hong Kong to various kindergartens, impacts on how I view choices made by parents in Hong Kong for their children. I have included a section on the political unrest (1.5) which occurred during my time in Hong Kong, and which impacted the research. This leads into the background to the research context (1.6), and the curriculum changes within Hong Kong’s early childhood sector which appear to have an impact on parental values by transitioning from a long-established Confucian approach to a child-centred approach. Next the chapter leads into the context and rationale for the study with a consideration of values in a contextual Hong Kong approach (1.7), and the Hong Kong voucher system for funding early childcare (1.8) which came into place in the year 2007, to support quality and professional development. Parental opportunity to gain a place for their child in a kindergarten is also discussed. Parental values and beliefs are discussed in section 1.9. The penultimate section (1.10) in this chapter discusses research aims and research questions and clarifies my underlying questions for this research. This introductory chapter then concludes by discussing the wider organisation of the thesis (1.11).

To gain a better understanding of the term values, this introductory chapter starts by underpinning this notion of values.

Values can be described as something that is seen as important or beneficial, to have worth, or the usefulness of something. It can further be described as ‘individual beliefs that motivate people one way or the other’ (Ethics unwrapped, 2024, NP). Cu and Xie (2024) further discuss that ‘cultural differences may contribute to parents’ different values that ultimately influence their behaviours and attitudes’(p 15). Halstead and Taylor (2000) defined values as the principles and fundamental convictions that act as general guides to behaviour. This can be translated as the norms by which certain behaviours and actions are found to be good or desirable. To simplify this, values are what people think of as good or bad, or right or wrong. This however makes values particularly testing to satisfactorily define, as no matter how elaborate they are, they always point back to pre-existing assumptions regarding how things ‘should’ be. Values can therefore be seen as the beliefs and principles which impact on the way we live, work and guide our attitudes and motivations (Ethics Sage, 2018). The study further seeks to gain some insight of what teachers believe the expectations of parents of Hong Kong are, regarding the pedagogy and values delivered in the kindergartens. A teacher is a professional educator who supports others to acquire knowledge and skills as well as values and competencies; a teacher guides and supports as well as assessing and training learners in a learning environment for example a nursery or a school setting (Wati, 2018).

# 1.2.1 Early childhood pedagogies and how these relate to pedagogical practice in Hong Kong practice.

The Early Childhood Education system in Hong Kong, which centres on children from birth to children aged six years old, has experienced considerable changes in the last few years. These changes are government led and initiated by parental and cultural beliefs and values. Previous literature has highlighted the concept that parents in Hong Kong were historically driven by academic values (Lee, 2014; Jensen, 2013; Hogan, 2014). However, Hong Kong has started to welcome different pedagogies by stepping away from the more didactic, conventional teaching approach for aspects of child centred, whereby the focus lies on ‘individual needs, abilities and interests’ (Saracho, 2020, p1) and play-based methods, whereby children learn through ‘exploration, exercising their bodies and using their imagination’( Miller and Almon, 2009, p15), which have been influenced by similar western approaches (Fung and Cheng, 2012). Pedagogy is described by Siraj-Blatchford, et al., (2002: p27) as:

The practice (or the art, the science, or the craft) of teaching but in the early years any adequate conception of educative practice must be wide enough to include the provision of learning environments for play and exploration. The term ‘teaching’ may therefore be unhelpful in this context, but effective early childhood pedagogy must still be ‘instructive.’ Instruction may therefore be defined to incorporate all of those processes that occur within the classroom that aim to initiate or maintain learning processes and/or to be effective means to achieve educational goals.

Teachers in Hong Kong have struggled to implement play-based, child-centred pedagogy in their classrooms (Cheng et al., 2015, Chen et al., 2017.). Teachers were used to a more didactic and teacher led approach. This challenge is compounded by a prevalent parent-driven policy discourse in early years institutions (Cheung et al., 2017; Hong Kong Government News, 2017). Additionally, the lack of professional development training for educators (Chan et al., 2009, Cheung, 2017) raises an important question: how can practitioners be effectively supported in incorporating the approaches advocated by the government into their daily practice? (Curriculum Development Council, 2017). The pedagogical values within the Hong Kong kindergartens, such as cultural awareness, child centred learning, play based education as well as parental involvement have been discussed as a government approach however the actual wider parental values have not been included in this pedagogical approach to learning. As previously stated, little research into the values of parents in Hong Kong has been published, nor their impact on their choices for a specific kindergarten. Research which discussed values in Hong Kong was linked to the wider society and family traditions, rather than choices parents make for their children (Chow and Lum, 2008, Shek and Sun ND). The rationale for this Thesis is to gain wider understanding of the values parents hold and to how these values impact on their choices for choosing a kindergarten for their child. The literature gap in this field whereby values of parents linked to educational choices and indeed the values of the teachers of the kindergartens is not highlighted, will start to be filled by acknowledging these values and to enable kindergartens to start to adapt their teaching and pedagogy to suit the wider public.

# 1.2.2 My philosophical stance.

Prior to engaging in this research project, it was necessary to recognise my philosophical stance as the researcher concerning my ontological and epistemological stance as this shaped the research question and design (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013).  In its simplest form, Ontology refers to: what is reality, and epistemology is concerned with how knowledge is created, understood, or transmitted (Plowright, 2011; Punch, 2014; Bryman, 2016;). My ontological view is that reality is socially constructed as all aspects of our social lives have an impact on our values and beliefs. In this research I have taken on an epistemological position with an interpretivist stance (Clark, et al., 2021) and made use of a small sample and in-depth qualitative data collection methods. The methods for this research I have chosen are interviews and questionnaires. I felt that by gaining direct information from the participants I would get a better insight into their values and beliefs. An epistemological stance seeks an ‘understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants’ (Bryman, 2016: 375). Therefore, I asked parents and teachers about their values and the way they wanted the children in their care to grow up having these values. I can best understand the social world by listening to the voices of the participants who live and work with the children daily. Trauth (2001 b:7) highlights that 'interpretivism is the lens most frequently influencing the choice of qualitative methods'. However, Myers and Avison (2002 b:5) have some hesitations regarding this view and discuss that ‘It should be clear that the word 'qualitative' is not synonym for 'interpretive’’. ‘Qualitative research may or may not be interpretive, depending on the underlying philosophical assumptions of the researcher’ (Goldkuhl, 2012: NP). To minimise the underlying assumptions and bias I had at the start of this research, and the interpretation of the findings, it has been important to listen and to mirror the expressions and voices of the participants (3.4.2) as clearly as possible whilst remaining conscious of my own personal bias and interpretation on this study, this will be discussed further in 3.10.

# 1.3 Research interest and my positionality.

As a researcher my individual epistemological position has an impact on my own social construction of the world, as my own stance has been constructed through my own background, race, gender, cultural upbringing, and class. It therefore consists of multiple identities (Schnackenberg and Simard, 2019). It is through these variable influences that my outlook as a researcher can be viewed from various positions at different times and my viewpoint is not ‘simple, static or straightforward but layered, complex and contradictory’ at times (Montgomery, 2016:136).

I was born and raised in the Netherlands and moved to the UK aged twenty-one and have lived in England for the past thirty-three years. Having had my educational journey until aged twenty-one in the Netherlands, it was interesting to see how the educational path was laid out for children in England. The values within the education system, perspectives on children’s development and academic progress differ from the educational path in the Netherlands. In the Netherlands children are streamed after leaving primary school into different schools linked with their ability. This can impact further study in the future as a certain level of study needs to be gained to access university. In the UK, most children go to the same secondary school where they are grouped into different groups according to their abilities, but this is not always made explicit to the children. Aspects such as behaviour and control over children’s behaviour are also interpreted differently. In the Netherlands children do not wear uniform to school, have a clear individual identity, and can wear make-up and jewellery. In the education systems in England, where I have worked for several years, I observed a strict adherence to wearing the correct uniform, no make-up and no jewellery, so the personal identity of students can only come out through their character, which at times evidences itself through negative behaviour, which is dealt with in a variety of ways for example: negative comments, isolation and sometimes exclusion from school for a short period of time in England. In contrast, Dutch primary and secondary schools do not have such systems in place, and the most punishment a student would receive is to stand outside the classroom for a short period, stay after school for a short period of time and/or discussions with parents regarding support for the student. This had an impact on me, as my personal idea of education is that a child should feel free to express their own identity, have their own values and some freedom within educational restrictions, to allow those values to be expressed. This can be accomplished through clothing choice, or the way children look (hair, make up, clothing), as well as through academic and creative aspects in their lives. However, having worked within English education for thirty-three years I have learned professionally to follow the rules and regulations of the educational settings where I have worked.

Many of the years working within the English education system were spent working with young children and their families, working in nurseries, primary schools, secondary schools and as part of the Educational Social Welfare Service. These years were followed by becoming a lecturer at the University of Hull for the past fourteen years, where I have been able to share theoretical and practical knowledge gained over the years. These experiences of working with a variety of age groups and their parents and families, have further shaped my perception and views further on what is important for children and their families, and I feel strongly that safety, health and family values as well as having their own identity, are more important than academic achievement. However, I also respect that this may not be the view of other people in general and that culturally there may be differences in what values are prioritised for children and families. This notion that different cultures have different views regarding academic achievement was what inspired me to research this topic in more detail. I felt there were clear differences between my own views and the views I witnessed in Hong Kong during visits to nurseries, I wanted to research in more detail to see if parents in Hong Kong really felt that academic achievements were more important than other specific values they may hold.

# 1.4 My positionality within the Hong Kong context.

Hong Kong was chosen for this research as I have spent 5 years as part of my current lecturer role, teaching the B.Ed. in Early Childhood Studies Degree to early year’s practitioners and teachers within Hong Kong, as well as delivering CPD sessions to teachers in kindergartens in Hong Kong. This has enabled me to obtain some awareness into the political and cultural aspects of Hong Kong. However, as an outsider (Arthur, Crossley, and Mc. Ness, 2016) and visitor to Hong Kong, it was difficult to get a real understanding of the deeper meaning of culture and upbringing of the participants in this study. This study can therefore be understood as contentious, as I am not from Hong Kong and have not grown up there. I must therefore acknowledge that my western upbringing has influenced my positionality. My own positionality has without doubt influenced and affected the choices I made, regardless of the efforts to stay impartial (Denscombe, 2017; Wellington, et al.,2005).

Prior to this study, as part of my job, I visited numerous kindergartens on a regular basis in Hong Kong, and I was intrigued by the differing values which were, and still are, portrayed within the various early childhood settings available to parents and their children in Hong Kong. For example, the observed emphasis on academic attainment at a young age and the need for young children in the early childhood setting in Hong Kong to gain knowledge which was specified by adult-led activities which at times appeared to be developmentally challenging. Further, an academic approach and focus on further educational attainment can be seen when perusing various kindergarten public websites and Facebook statuses, as an example, one states:

The purpose of kindergarten is to help each child, via the appropriate approaches, to become autonomous and to gain necessary knowledge and skills in order to succeed in primary education. (French English academy Facebook page 2021).

The children I observed in kindergartens in Hong Kong, as part of my own professional development, were not encouraged to engage in free play and had to sit down, to either engage with a prescribed activity or to listen to an adult talk for lengthy periods of time. This may of course not be the case in all kindergartens in Hong Kong, but my visits sparked an interest in me as to why these settings appeared to have such a different approach to children’s developmental learning from the previous knowledge I gained from settings in England and the Netherlands.

Up until that point I only had my own educational background, being a parent myself and working in early childhood settings within England as a compass for values within early childhood settings. I felt that the vast variety of options available to parents in Hong Kong (see 1.5) as well as the varying values and aspects of quality, regarding children’s development, portrayed in the kindergartens was remarkable. During conversations with members of staff and parents in the various kindergartens I visited, it transpired that parents make careful choices about which kindergarten to choose for their child and can often travel for up to an hour to reach the chosen kindergarten. Again, this was surprising to me as in my experience of parents in England is that they generally go to the nearest available early years setting with their child.

As an outsider to these settings and this cultural characteristic of travelling for extended periods in a day, I was intrigued that parents were willing to travel for up to an hour to drop off their child at a chosen setting, or what they deemed, the right setting with the right values for their child. This made me question what it was that parents wanted, for their child. To start to gain some understandings of what parents were looking for, I needed to first gain wider knowledge of the educational systems in Hong Kong and specifically their early childhood practices. During the research period, I was mindful that I was a guest, and as an outsider in Hong Kong cannot claim to fully understand the intricacies which underly the Hong Kong culture. As a researcher, I recognise that I have a background which has shaped my own values, knowledge, bias, belief systems and developments within the early years sector as a professional, as a researcher, but also as a parent. Personal background and experiences meant that researcher bias is unavoidable as we are all affected by our backgrounds, experiences, and the environmental factors we experience. Meighan and Siraj Blatchford (1997) discuss that a researcher will continually theorise about social life and acquire their own personal stances, and positionality, and as research is a social act, it has consequently inescapable restrictions to impartiality. This is echoed by Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013), who also believes that a personal stance reflects researchers’ ‘deeply held attitudes, opinions and concerns about what is important’ (p,1968), this can then impact on their impartiality as their beliefs may impact on their research and the decisions they make, along the data gathering collection and analysis journey. It was therefore important for me to acknowledge that whilst participants may reflect on their experiences and beliefs in different ways, that this research recognised that the participants ‘may be working within a context of social and historical forces, which is beyond their comprehension’ (Pring, 2015:122). By giving participants of the interviews to opportunity to revisit their transcribed interviews I was ensuring that bias was minimised where possible. I also gathered data from three different groups of participants giving me a wider opportunity to assemble data from a range of views which subsequently led to an understanding of participants views on values and cultural principles which impacted their choices regarding educational opportunities. I do acknowledge that bias cannot be completely eradicated. Prior to gathering any research data, I encountered some challenges, which are discussed in the next section.

# 1.5 The research process and impact of political unrest.

During June 2019, Hong Kong residents started to demonstrate against planned legislation to extradite people who had been charged with criminal offences in Hong Kong to mainland China for sentencing and punishment (Cheung and Hughes, 2020). Violent clashes erupted and demonstrations took place all over Hong Kong, demonstrators blocked government buildings, shopping malls and streets, paralysing the economy during prolonged protests (Hollingsworth, 2019). The bill for extradition was halted in April of 2020, but the demonstrations and protests continued as the people of Hong Kong stipulated full democracy and an independent enquiry into police actions.

During the time of the protests (October 2019), I was lecturing in Hong Kong to aspiring teachers and delivering continuous professional development (CPD) to practicing teachers. The protests became a daily occurrence and listening to the daily news, as well as being informed by my students and staff at the university, ensured that we knew which areas to avoid each day, where the next protests were going to take place. Considerable physical and economic damage was done to the shopping malls, streets, the airport, and the MTR (rail network), which at times meant that it was difficult for students and staff to get to the university. Finally, the day came when the university where I was lecturing, came under attack by the protesters and demonstrators whilst I was lecturing, so my colleagues and I had to hastily leave the university. We had to leave Hong Kong the next day, as staying and continuing to deliver lectures had become impossible and there was a clear concern for personal safety. The protests and demonstrations mostly ceased during the remainder of 2020 when the Coronavirus pandemic swept the world.

The first Covid-19 cases in Hong Kong were confirmed in January 2020 (Hong Kong Free Press, January 2020). This was the time where I had planned to go back to Hong Kong to continue the lecture programme, be a keynote speaker at a conference and to undertake further research. Again, this path was closed to me as the university of Hull where I work, was not allowing any travel to Hong Kong, initially due to the political aspect which was still very much impacting daily life of the Hong Kong people, but then also because of the threat of the Coronavirus. This pandemic then affected the rest of the year, and all face-to-face lectures were moved to an online format. Because travel to Hong Kong was not possible at this time, I had to make changes to my data collection approach.

The methodology chapter will discuss the way participants were approached for this study. Personally, this hiatus of being unable to gather data earlier meant a long delay in being able to move forward with the study, which caused uncertainty and at times felt very stressful. However, I decided to continue with the research as I felt I had started to uncover some noteworthy viewpoints of Hong Kong values, and parental choices made for young children within Hong Kong.

The next section will start to uncover the background of the educational options parents have for their children.

# 1.6 Background to the research context.

Hong Kong has a wide variety of Early Childhood Educational settings. All are ‘privately funded’ and categorised as ‘non-profit or private independent’ (Wu, 2014:39). This presents the educational early years settings (hereafter referred to as kindergartens), with a large degree of self-government. All settings are fee paying and this has led to parental policy drivers in regards the early childhood curriculum which has ‘often constituted the introduction of formal academics, homework and skills at a young age’ (Humpage, 2021: 7). Chan and Chan (2003:11) debate that the curriculum and methods adopted in early years educational settings are ‘unduly influenced by what they think parents want and are prepared to pay for.’ However, since their debate in 2003, the government have re-introduced a child-centred, play-based approach (Cheng, et al., 2015). This approach was first introduced during the 1991 Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum which was revised in 2006 (Curriculum Development Council, 2006). More recently the child-centred approach has been underpinned by the 2017-18 academic year: Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide documentation (Curriculum Development Council, 2017). These changes to the approach to learning and the influence of cultural values (Wong and Rao, 2015; Yang and Li, 2018 a), show apparent disconnection between; the historical and cultural Confucian values, more westernised values, and values which parents would like to share with their children. Culture encompasses ideas, customs and social behaviours of a particular people or society, the customs, beliefs, and institutions are passed down through the generations. Culture further ‘includes codes of manners, dress, language, religion, rituals, art. norms of behaviour, such as law and morality, and systems of belief.’ (Spradley, accessed 2024). We can therefore understand that the culture in Hong Kong differs from cultures in other areas of the world, but also has some overlap as culture is influenced by so many different aspects as highlighted by Spradley (2024). There also appears to be a disconnect between the transition of a ‘reverse of the traditional Confucian form of pedagogy that stresses rote learning and direct teaching’ (Lau, 2012:12) and the more current government approach to a child-centred approach, which can impede on the delivery of values as seen by educators and parents. Some parents and educators still believe in didactic rote learning whilst others put more importance on a child centred approach. The next section will share a historical context to provide a wider perspective of the origin of parental and educational academic views.

# 1.7 Context for the study: a Hong Kong educational history synopsis.

This research is situated within the Hong Kong context, which is still deeply guided by an established Confucian culture, and parental values reflect this (Berndt, et al, 1993 and Lai, Zhang, and Wang, 2000). Hong Kong, as other East Asian cultures, concentrate on values such as emotional self-discipline, self-control, and preserving interpersonal harmony (Shea, Yang and Leong, 2010). These contrast with western cultural perspectives and values, where in general independence and assertiveness are accentuated as looked-for objectives of child development (DfE, 2019), although this end goal is also disputed by early childhood organisations (Pilcher, 2022, and Gaunt, 2022). The end goal in East Asian cultures is not to attain autonomy from others, but to accomplish interdependence through the implementation of communal goals for the benefit of the social unit, and this starts with the family (Greenfield, et al., 2003). Hong Kong’s emphasis on high quality education and academic achievement in the Early Childhood Education sector (Lee, 2014; Jensen, 2013; Hogan, 2014), mirrors cultural expectations to perform academically from a young age, and many authors have commented that Hong Kong’s relatively didactic education system is largely set up to ensure academic and examination success (Lee, 2014, Watkins and Biggs, 1996).  The focus on performance is reflected in Early Childhood Education, whereby:

ECE, which contributes to the future wellbeing of society by developing children’s later academic ability, making them more independent, more socially adept, and more self-confident. (Wong and Rao, 2015:6)

So Early Childhood Education in Hong Kong has a role to play in future education and job prospects as well as for social and relational abilities. Kindergarten education is not compulsory in Hong Kong, yet most three to six-year-old children attend some form of early childhood in preschool, playgroup, or kindergarten settings (Wong and Rao, 2015). With close to 100% of children attending, this indicates that parents in Hong Kong attach strong values to their children’s kindergarten attendance (Audit Commission, 2013 and, Pre-Primary Education Voucher scheme (PEVS), online: np).  The next section will clarify the early education system in Hong Kong further to gain a wider understanding of their education systems.

# 1.7.1 The Hong Kong Early Childhood Education system.

In Hong Kong Early Childhood Education is defined as ‘pre-primary education,’ this term describes the three years of kindergarten education. Historically this phase of education has not been compulsory or free and the demands for Early Childhood Education (ECE) have been met by the private sector, the ECE sector has been ‘privately and publicly underfinanced and bureaucratically forgotten’ (Li, et al., 2014, NP). This has meant that parents who wanted their child to attend a childcare setting would have had to pay tuition fees. This in turn could have affected their choices for an early childhood setting as the monetary costs may have been too high in the past. Although this is not unique to Hong Kong as the same issue can be seen in the USA where according to the public spending in childcare in early education by the OECD (OECD, 2022), spending on childcare is the lowest in the developed world, it may have had an impact on choices parents in Hong Kong made for their children's early education. The education system in Hong Kong went through a reform which is discussed in the next section.

# 1.7.2 Reform of the Hong Kong Education system.

In 2000, the reform of the school education system was introduced after the return of Hong Kong to China after one hundred years of British colonial rule. This showed a shift from a ‘teacher-centred, to a child-centred approach,’ which was previously enhanced with a ‘play-based developmental’ approach (EDB, 2016: online, NP). Chief Executive C.H. Tung emphasised a:

Commitment to enhancing the quality of education in Hong Kong in order to ensure the existence of a well-rounded, highly skilled, and innovative workforce. (Pearson and Rao, 2012: 363).

This new commitment resulted in a move in educational policies within Hong Kong. New notions of ‘child-centeredness’’ and holistic development have since been disseminated (Pearson and Rao, 2012) and are now seen as the core values of Early Childhood Education.

This was the first time in Hong Kong history that ECE was seen as significant as before the year 2000, ECE was excluded from education policy documents (Wong and Rao, 2015, and Watkins, 2009). Before this change, the teaching approaches used in Hong Kong had been associated with didactic and highly structured methods which had long been the implemented established learning tactic for Early Childhood Education (NG and Roa, 2008). Before the reforms, attendance in a kindergarten was not funded and parents had to pay for their children to attend a setting (Rao and Li, 2009). Insufficient attention to Early Childhood Education and the lack of government funding resulted in a ‘widely disparate quality of ECE provision’ (Rao and Li, 2009: p 233). A variety of settings fell under the category of non-profit making kindergartens (NPMKs) or Private Independent Kindergartens (PIKs), depending on whether they were private enterprises or charitable organisations (Education Bureau, 2015). The funding issue was then partly resolved when the government introduced the voucher system.

# 1.8 Impact of the voucher system of ECE funding in Hong Kong.

In 2007 the Hong Kong Voucher system, which enabled funding children’s attendance at ECE settings, was implemented (Pre-Primary Education Voucher Scheme (PEVS), online ND: np). This new voucher scheme enabled children to attend an ECE setting for three years, from age three to age six years old. The implementation of this free education policy alleviated parents of the financial burden of having their child attend an ECE setting.

By increasing parental obtaining and negotiating powers, for a place for their child in a kindergarten of choice, through vouchers and expanding the clarity of information regarding the various options, parents were empowered and ‘freed’ to choose schools, public or private (non-profit making kindergartens (NPMKs) or Private Independent Kindergartens (PIKs).This enabled parents to find a suitable school/kindergarten which complied with their personal values they wanted to instil in their child. Meanwhile, governments often delegated their executive accountabilities, thus both NPMKs and PIK’s schools attempted to deliver services that they believed were most appropriate to the requirements of parents and students, leading to the market competition of educational outcomes (Steuerle, 2000; Daniels and Trebilcock, 2005; Wong and Rao, 2020).

This change enabled parental values to come into play, because parents had wider scope to investigate what kindergartens offered, and how these offers connected to parental values and beliefs. The choices of kindergartens were however limited to certain types of private kindergartens which had to adhere to government standards of quality (Wong and Rao, 2020). Parents were given a voucher which enabled them to choose a kindergarten for their child within the non-profit making Kindergartens who adhered to government guidelines regarding quality and were part of this Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme (PEVS) scheme, this in turn became a limiting factor regarding choices for parents.

To give a clearer overview Figure 1 and Figure 2, show the education landscape in Hong Kong and the number of kindergartens on offer during the year 2021-2022, as well as the expenditure on education from the government for the year 2022/2023.

*Number of kindergartens:****1,042****Enrolment:****155,956***

*Number of primary schools:****591*** *Enrolment:****348,994***

*Number of secondary schools:****508*** *Enrolment:****325,927***

*Number of international schools:****54*** *Number of higher education institutes:****22***

*Estimated government expenditure on education for the 2022/23 school year:****HK$111.9 billion****(US$14.3 billion)  
Percentage of total estimated government expenditure:****13.8 percent.***

*Note: The above figures are the latest available. The number of institutions is from the 2021/22 school year; enrolment figures are as of September 15, 2022, for the 2022/23 school year.*

Source: Hong Kong Education Bureau by Huld, (2022*)*

Figure 1. Hong Kong’s Education Landscape in Figures

Figure 2 shows the number of schools by sector during the same year, here we can see that there are more public/ local kindergartens than international kindergarten settings.

A screenshot of a graph

Description automatically generated

Source: Hong Kong Education Bureau by Huld (2022).

Figure 2, Number of schools by sector 20121/2022

These figures (1 and 2) give a sense of the large scale of kindergartens available, and money spent on education in Hong Kong, this is to clarify the many choices parents have regarding the choice for a kindergarten. From these two figures public, local kindergartens outweigh the international and other private kindergartens and therefore parents in Hong Kong have a wide choice of options for their children.

# 1.8.1 Raising Quality of Education in Hong Kong.

Another key government objective was raising the quality of education within kindergartens by subsidising professional developmental and training for principals and teachers. Training needs and the completion of gaining degree level qualifications was linked to the Pre-Primary Education Voucher (PEVS) scheme and service quality to performance indicators, established by the government with the compulsory Quality Assurance (QA). This QA comprised of self-evaluation and official inspections, and only if these were passed would the kindergarten receive their money linked to the voucher scheme. The voucher scheme enabled the government to have a direct impact on the private ECE sector by influencing market forces and governmental QA activities (Mok, 2003; Rizvi and Lingard 2010).

The PEVS further increased direct government control regarding the quality of teacher training in the private education market, therefore putting an emphasis on pre-academic training and competition of teacher qualifications within the sector (Wong and Rao, 2020). The guidelines for the PEVS were aimed at improving the structural quality within the kindergarten of teacher abilities and training, and to achieve this the government put tighter control systems on the physical setting (buildings and environment) by implementing QA inspections as well as by raising the qualifications held by the teaching staff within the settings. The PEVS performance indicators were based on a developmentalist viewpoint and in agreement with fundamental ‘values of all-round development, child-centredness, play-based curricula and pedagogies, and happy learning’ (Wong and Rao, 2020:7). This was in sharp contrast with the ‘authoritarian, academically oriented, and child-unfriendly curricula and practices of which Hong Kong kindergartens were famous for’ (Wong and Rao, 2020:7). Such practices were criticised by many academics and researchers who argued that they negatively impacted the development of young children (Opper 1996; Chan and Chan 2002; Yuen 2005; Pearson and Rao 2006; Fung and Lam 2009; Rao, Ng, and Pearson 2009).

The implementation of PEVS from 2007-2012 also had the effect of harnessing market forces as there is a global interest in ECE. Studies (Heckman and Masterov 2007; OECD 2015, 2017) have shown the potential of providing higher rates of human capital when comparing investment in education during a lifespan and ECE investment, shows good prospects for those who have a higher investment. The PEVS subsidy lapsed in 2011/2012 and left some gaps in the professional development of staff (Ming Sin Wong and Rao, 2022).

A recent study by Ming Sin Wong and Rao (2022) investigated views of parents and service providers in Hong Kong in relation to the PEVS. The study highlighted that parents remained neutral regarding the influence of the PEVS policy on quality despite the government having promoted quality in relation to child-centredness and pre-schools and kindergartens having made efforts to meet the quality standards. One finding was that parents valued the financial benefit from the PEVS policy and that the more socially advantaged parents spent money they saved on fees on extra educational curricular activities.

The PEVS scheme was replaced with the ‘Free Quality Kindergarten Education Scheme’ (FQKES) in 2017 (Education Bureau, 2016 a). A review in 2021 (Report on the Review of the Kindergarten Education Scheme, 2021) of the FQKES, showed that the new approach had increased parental engagement with the kindergartens through Parent Teacher Associations (PTA’s) as well as through developing a parent education framework, throughout all educational settings within Hong Kong, which supports parents to join in with educational activities. Further grants were set up by the Hong Kong government to encourage the home-school connections. The 2021 report highlighted evidence that more teachers were engaging with the ‘learning through play’ curriculum. Teachers highlighted that there were more opportunities to engage with extended professional development.

During 2017, the Guide for the ‘Pre-Primary Curriculum’ in Hong Kong was revised and renamed the ‘Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide’ (EDB, 2017). The amended curriculum included the updated guidelines and principles for ‘teachers and educational institutes, and guidelines for parents, in understanding the educational, growth and learning needs of their children including physical development’ (EDB, 2017: online, np). This guidance has been implemented in all pre-primary establishments and highlights the importance of the core values whereby kindergartens need to consider children's interests, needs and abilities and:

Create a stimulating learning environment that facilitates children's development of multiple intelligences. Through life experiences, sensory encounters, exploration, and interesting games, children's holistic development can be fostered.

(Education Bureau (EDB), 2017 online; guide to pre-primary curriculum).

The Education Bureau (EDB) (2019: online), further highlights the developmental objectives for: ‘Physical Development, Cognitive and Language Development, Affective and Social Development and Aesthetic Development’. These areas of development can be accomplished through six learning areas, ‘Physical Fitness and Health, Language, Early Mathematics, Science and Technology, Self and Society and Arts’ (EDB, 2019: online). There is an emphasis on three overall key learning elements within this curriculum, which are: knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These were designed to prepare the child for life and to underpin their future education. An international influence can be noted here as the English Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) contains very similar categories (DFE, 2022) and a slimmed down version of the EYFS is regularly used within many kindergartens in Hong Kong.  Some international influences on early childhood education, such as the previously highlighted western-derived pedagogies, such as Montessori (Isaacs, 2018), Reggio Emilia (Thornton and Brunton, 2015), and High/Scope (Cheng, 2006), are not favoured by all Hong Kong parents. The prevailing culture in Hong Kong is a Confucian culture. Culture consists of a group of individuals who share the same values and can access the same environmental resources, share beliefs and who pass on these beliefs and values to their younger generation (Tudge, et al., 2000). Kluckhohn (1967) defines culture as ‘a way of life of a group of people’ and as ‘a way of thinking, feeling and believing’ (p 354). Geertz (2015), however states that the concept of culture is an ‘interpretive science in search of meaning’ (p,1). To find this meaning, Hong Kong parents are often motivated by conventional Confucian cultural values whereby academic success and more academic orientated, teacher-led educational programmes are favoured (Yuen and Greishaber, 2009; Wong and Rao, 2015). This is echoed by some more traditional early childhood teachers in Hong Kong, who believe that child-centred approaches challenge their traditional ideas of teaching and learning, and therefore impact on the constructivist practices they use in their teaching spaces (Ng and Rao, 2008). Ho (2015) further discusses that there are contentions in Confucian heritage cultures, to young people learning through play. The sociocultural incompatibilities are shown within this context, between the western and Chinese pedagogical approaches (Chen, Li, and Wang 2017). There seems to be a presumption that children’s learning and academic progress is interrupted rather than enhanced by play, as is the wider international view (Nelson, 2007 and Dewey, 1986). However, as Markova’s (2017) international case study research shows, bilingual pre-school children, who engaged in play, benefitted significantly more in gaining language skills, than during teacher structured academic approaches of gaining wider language skills. Further to this, Geneser (2017: 45) states ‘Cognitively, play enables young brains to process information and, in fact, supports academic progress.’

Although currently there is a clear set of guidelines in the form of the Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide (EDB, 2017) and the Free Quality Kindergarten Education Scheme (Education Bureau, 2016a), there is still a lack of clarity around parental and teacher perceptions regarding values to support children's development. The 2017 curriculum and scheme emphasise a more academic approach rather than personal and cultural values. This lack of a value driven approach within a kindergarten is an important notion, as parents cannot make an informed decision for their child if they do not have a clear overview of which values are being introduced to their child whilst in the educational early childhood setting. It is therefore important to start researching the values that teachers incorporate within their daily pedagogies as well as values which parents feel are important for their child. Access to kindergartens was widened in 2012, giving parents some wider opportunities for choices for their child, although these choices were more linked to academic achievement and developmental aspects rather than value driven motivations (Wong and Rao, 2022).

The Hong Kong government started working in 2012 towards implementing wider free kindergarten education after the funding for the PEVS was going to be abolished and to ‘develop one of the best, most competitive kindergarten education policies in the world’ (Chong, 2012:34). During 2013, the Hong Kong government set up a Free Kindergarten Education Committee (2015), with the intention of investigating the implementation of free education for fifteen years (age 3 to18 years) rather than the current twelve years (age 6 to18 years) of free education which was in place in Hong Kong. The committee took two years to study and plan for a proposal to establish free ECE, thereby following other governments in the greater China region (Macau and Taiwan) which had implemented this policy during 2007, by implementing the fifteen-year free education policy which was realised during the 2017- 2018 school year (Li, et al, 2010).

All Hong Kong’s children between the ages of three and six are now eligible for fee assistance (Education Bureau, 2019 online). The Kindergarten and Childcare Centre Fee Remission Scheme (KCFRS), ensures that all children can attend preschool irrespective of their parents’ financial status. High numbers of children attend preschool because often both parents have to work to meet the living costs in Hong Kong and additionally parents consider that pre-school is a preparatory program for primary schools and often pre-schools are linked (as unofficial feeder schools) (Rao, et al.,2009).Therefore, as the pre-school is seen by parents as a preparatory program, it is vital that parents choose the pre-school which they feel is best for their child as this choice may impact the child's future, this is further discussed in section 1.7.

# 1.9 Impact of values on pre-school choices parents make.

Parental values can influence significantly the choices parents make for their children. To contextualise this, we can briefly compare Hong Kong and English systems. In England all funded early childhood settings adhere to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) as set by the government (DFE, 2021), which impacts on how early childhood settings support the developmental needs of young children and how they prepare children for school. All settings follow the same guidance and systems for assessing children's development throughout the country (DFE, 2017, DfE 2021). In Hong Kong however, there is a large variety of curriculum approaches in early childhood settings, which all operate under their own systems and although they adhere to the policies set by the government, these are not strictly enforced. The varying approaches which may be linked to for example, Montessori (Isaacs, 2018), Steiner (Yang and Li, 2019), Reggio Emilia (Thornton and Brunton, 2015), and High scope approaches (Chen et al., 2017) therefore take on their own curriculum and pedagogical approach (Yang and Li, 2019: Chen et al., 2017). In this context there are wider opportunities for parents in Hong Kong to see how their values fit within the values of individual kindergartens, taking into account the many kindergartens available in a relatively small area (see figure 1) as well as looking at the broader systems set up by the Hong Kong government. Parents can decide which values and priorities they feel are more important for their child, rather than following the EYFS as is the case in England. All early years’ settings in Hong Kong are privately run and are divided into various categories such as:

Non-profitmaking (NPM) kindergartens (KGs) and private independent (PI) KGs, depending on their sponsoring organisations which can be either voluntary agencies or private enterprises. (Education Bureau, 2019, online, NP).

The early years settings in Hong Kong (NPM, KG and PI) are inspected and supported on aspects of curriculum, teaching approaches and school administration through a yearly self-evaluation document as well as periodically by inspectors from the education bureau (EDB,2019). Prospective kindergartens gain statutory requirement and recommendation information from the ‘Operation Manual for Pre-primary Institutions’, this manual however does not include values/beliefs which should be held at the settings (Education Bureau, 2019, online), or if parental values are considered, the impact of parental choice will be discussed in the next section.

# 1.9.1 Parental choice impact.

As previously discussed, parents in Hong Kong are more willing to travel for long periods of time to ensure their child attends an early childhood setting which parents feel impacts the most on the child’s development or suits their specific needs. However, it is also important to understand that it is customary that all children in Hong Kong undergo some form of interview prior to starting at a kindergarten to ‘gauge their social, cognitive, and linguistic abilities’ (Davis, 2019, NP). Parents often put their child’s name down on waiting lists for several kindergartens in case they do not get offered a place at their first choice. In Hong Kong, the pre-primary education a child attends, has a direct impact on which primary school they will attend in the future, so the choice of kindergarten is not made lightly (Ren and Edwards, 2017). Although there is a greater variety of choice, the need for ‘interviews,’ costs implications and travel all have an impact on the choices parents can realistically make for their child.

This section has started to highlight that there are wider forces such as Confucian, Chinese, and western values which impact on parental choices. Further forces such as academic expectations, high competition between settings to attract children and wider social expectation also have a role in parental choices regarding their children’s early education. Lubienski (2008) highlighted the reasons why parents should be able to make those choices of pre-primary and primary education for their child, discussing that parents recognise the strengths and weaknesses of their child, and want to reinforce their personal family values during their educational journey. Feinberg and Lubienski, (2008: 2) further draw attention to ‘a degree of consumer-driven, market-style competition’ which is injected by parental choices into the educational school market. Economically this should increase the incentives for the educational market to provide better services and quality (Kahlenberg, 2003). This marketisation of education, supports the belief of ‘winning at the starting line’ which is a widely used approach within Hong Kong, whereby parents believe that choosing the correct early childhood setting for their child will support the child in gaining better employment when they are older (Cheung, 2009 and Chua, 2011, South China Post, no author, 2016).

The view that parental values are not socially neutral has been discussed by Ren and Edwards (2017), who consider that in ancient and modern China, academic success has been viewed as a gateway to a prosperous future career and upward mobility. Ren and Edwards (2017) also deliberate that the expectation of Chinese parents, is that kindergartens teach children ‘pre-academic skills’ (p 1053) (reading maths, writing) as well as ensuring their engagement with wider learning activities and after school extra-curricular activities, this extrinsic value is ‘to ensure their children do not fall behind at the starting line.’ (Ren and Edwards, 2017:1053).

Zheng Wan Tai (2016) discusses a study undertaken by the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies at CUHK in 2016. The study measured public views on ‘winning at the starting line’ in Hong Kong. Seven hundred and fifty-one respondents aged 18 or above were interviewed for the study which found that 59% of respondents did not agree with the argument that children should be made to win from the start. Arguments against ‘winning from the starting line’ were that there was too much pressure on children, and enforced competition at a young age was not good for them. On the other hand, 34% of respondents approved of the concept of ‘winning from the starting line’, believing it would support children’s ability to discover and develop new interests and because children absorb knowledge quickly, they are able to learn better. Those in favour also expressed the views that they did not want their children to fall behind their contemporaries (Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies at CUHK, 2016). Other factors discussed within the study were stress of the child and the time it took to undertake homework. The respondents were asked about which aspect of development they felt was most important for their children, with respondents citing character, health and wellness and self-care skills. Only 4.5% of respondents noted academic achievement as an important aspect. A high percentage (89%) of respondents expressed the view that ‘winning from the starting line’ was a common concept within Hong Kong.

This research shows the pressures put on the importance of academic success within the Hong Kong community. Parents feel there is too much pressure on their children to achieve, but at the same time they assert this pressure themselves to ensure their child is ahead of the academic game by ensuring an appropriate kindergarten education for their child, which leads into a ‘good’ primary school for their child.  This is a complex situation, parents in Hong Kong have always been highly respected and their voice and choice has been considered within kindergartens which has in turn made kindergartens respond by marketing their services to fit with parental desires of an academic approach (Chan, 2019). This marketisation focusses mainly of academic skills which can come at the cost of areas of a child’s development (Fung, 2007; Fung and Lam, 2009). To better understand choices made by parents in Hong Kong it is important to gain some insight of their values and how these impact on choices parents make for their children in regard education.

Values and cultural traditions, as well as social backgrounds, are widely represented within the early childhood sector in Hong Kong, due to the great influx of nationalities within Hong Kong. The western perception of Hong Kong education is as a didactic, rote based learning regime, favouring high academic achievement (Yang and Li, 2018a).

I question if this really is the current experience and opinion of parents and teachers within Hong Kong and if the values parents hold, are reflected in the values delivered by teachers in Early Childhood Education settings. So, the main issue to research within this thesis is whether there a disconnect between the values parents and teachers hold for the children in their care, and if so how this influences the way kindergartens offer their educational childcare and the values within this care. Further the thesis will seek to understand if and how this influences how parents choose a specific kindergarten for their child.

Educators in Hong Kong are expected to represent the values of the government, as set out by the Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide (Curriculum Development Council, 2017). These represent a shift from a teacher-centred, to a child-centred approach (1.5.2), which was previously enhanced with a play-based developmental approach (EDB, 2016). The new curriculum, as previously discussed, highlights a need to consider children’s interests, needs and abilities (1.6.2).

As well as representing the curriculum, educators also need to represent the values of their educational setting, and these values may depend on the setting. A kindergarten could take a more didactic approach to learning, or could be a child centred approach to learning, as pedagogy differs between early years settings. The kindergartens could potentially have conflicting pedagogical practices and values from both an educators and parental perception (Lunn et al, 2017). This new direction of delivering Early Childhood Education will impact on the daily practice of teachers (Rankin 2000; Chan 2001; Van Deur and Murray-Harvey, 2005) and the success of the implementation of governmental changes depends on the teaching and learning approaches as set by the teaching staff.

The next section will start to look at research aims and research questions. It will highlight the sub-questions which have supported the study and will further discuss the organisation of the thesis.

# 1.10 Research aims and research questions.

This thesis aims to explore parents’ values in relation to their children’s early education specifically, the importance of parent’s personal values, wider Confucian or western values or the different approaches of delivering education to their children. The thesis asks:

How do values associated with academic achievement influence the choices Hong Kong parents make about early childhood provision?

The reason for studying parents’ educational choices for their children, is to establish whether educational choice for children from a very early age is linked with parental values, or if this choice is linked with, as literature tells us (Yang and Li, 2018a), academic achievement in the future or cultural aspects of Hong Kong itself. These influences may be the personal parental values (for example: learning respect, social skills, creative thinking skills) or wider values they feel are important, such as attending a particular kindergarten which leads into a more academic option at a later educational stage of their child’s life to ensure good economic gain or better job opportunities at a mature age.

# 1.10.1 Research sub-questions.

To enable me to gain wider knowledge of the values of parents who took part in this research, situated in Hong Kong and the choices these parents make regarding choosing a kindergarten, which is in line with their values, I posed the following questions which are discussed further in chapter 6, before deciding on the final research question:

What are parental values in general, and in specific in Hong Kong?

* Which aspects (economic, political, and global) may impact on these values?
* What values do teachers hold in Hong Kong in early years settings?
* Do the values of parents and teachers match or are there clear divisions?

The study reported in this thesis is designed to understand what in Hong Kong’s complex context, influenced by so many different ‘forces’ really drives parental choice? The study seeks to uncover whether Confucian principles, western values, academic expectations, high competition, high stakes, are key influences in the choices parents make for their children regarding their educational journey, or if there are some different values or forces are at play. However, the study and its sub questions does not seek to generalise these findings but merely to start to gain some understanding of values and linked choices the parents in this particular research make.

The previous sections in this chapter have given an overview of my own research interest, my positionality as well as the impact the political unrest and the Covid pandemic had on my study. I further described the background to the research context and the policy and curriculum changes within Hong Kong and the impact these have had on funding, a funding system which came into place and was subsequently abolished. This then led to parental values and the following section which showed the underlying research aims and questions for this study. The last section 1.9 will give an overview of the structure of the other chapters within this study.

# 1.11 Organisation and context of the thesis.

The following sections show how the rest of the thesis is structured and the context of each chapter.

Chapter 2, the literature review critically reviews the literature, which underpins the research. I start with an introduction to contextual information which highlights historical changes which have had an impact in Hong Kong’s society and parental values (2.1). I continue by highlighting some of the Hong Kong historical context, which gives a deeper insight into the general history of Hong Kong and the impact migration has had on the values within Hong Kong (2.2). This then leads into an understanding of wider values (2.3), and what this term means in general, before delving deeper into the meaning of global perspectives on parental values (2.4).The chapter then includes a section on parental values and the early education systems (2.5) before discussing the competitive nature of Early Childhood Education in Hong Kong (2.6) and the wide choices of types of provision available to parents and children. The section further discusses how an early choice of setting impacts the child’s wider education in the future as well as the concept of ‘winning at the starting line’. Cultural values are then discussed, to show the impact culture has on decisions parents make as well as how the influx of western immigrants has changed some of the cultural landscape (2.7). This is followed by a section on the values of Hong Kong and in specific the Confucian values (2.8).

Chapter 3 sets out and justifies the methods and methodology and considers the rationale for the study. The chapter starts with an introduction to the methodology and sets out the context and locality of the study (3.1). The chapter further considers rationale for the study (3.2). It then critically discusses the qualitative methods used (3.2), the theoretical approaches which underpin the study (3.3), and the ethical issues surrounding this thesis (3.4). A section on the pilot study and the lessons I learned from this pilot study (3.5), is followed by a description and justification of the research processes (3.6). The chapter further includes an explanation and justification of the research methods and in particular the questionnaires and the interviews held with teachers and parents (3.7). I then include a discussion on the generalisability (3.8) of the study followed by the validity, bias and reliability issues which impact on this study (3.9). The chapter further deliberates the constraints and timeframe that I encountered throughout this study. It concludes with an explanation and justification of data analysis processes and how I identified the themes (3.10).

Chapter 4 draws together the underlying dialogues and stories, as they are told by the interviewed parents as well as the questionnaires which were completed by parent and teacher participants. This chapter reiterates who the participants in this study are. The cultural legacies of Hong Kong are linked to the Zodiac calendar as a frame for the narrative which holds together the individual and the collective stories of the participants in the study (4.2). The voices of the participants (4.3) are shared through their illustrative stories within this chapter, and this is followed by an overview of the parental background of the interviewed parent participants. This gives the chapter a clear focus as to who the parents are and what they believe to be important for their children. The teacher (4.4) and the parent (4.5) questionnaires are discussed. This is followed by the individual themes which arose from these illustrative stories are then highlighted (4.6). The analysis and coding of the interviews and questionnaires and the uncovered themes are discussed (4.7) The parental background is included for clarity to gain understanding of who the interviewed and questionnaire participants parents and teachers are (4.7.1) This is followed by the initial uncovered themes. These themes (4.7.2) are (4.7a-g) Chinese language and culture, academic approaches, choice of kindergarten, multicultural inclusivity and acceptance, curriculum and kindergarten interviews and social skills. Wider observations by the parent participants are also included as some of these have an important impact on the choices the parents have made for their child.

Chapter 5 moves into the consideration of the key themes which have arisen from the parental interviews as well as the combined teacher and parent questionnaires. I engaged with Braun and Clarke’s (2022) thematic analysis to familiarise myself with the data and to conclude the themes within this study. The themes are discussed as follows: Academic values (5.1), Curriculum in the kindergarten (5.2), Cultural and Heritage values (5.3), Social and Personal Skills (5.4) and there were two minority themes (5.5) which were important to highlight, and these were the practice of kindergarten interviews and the value of play. The chapter then includes a wider discussion (5.6) which highlights the sub questions which were posed at the start of the thesis. The chapter then concludes with a summary (5.7).

Chapter 6 reflects on the process and the outcomes of the study and includes some recommendations. The aims of the study are reiterated, (6.1) and my personal learning journey has been reflected upon. The recommendations highlight first the findings which were that parents and teachers have very similar values regarding personal and social development. This section further discusses some of the limitations but also how because of limitations some parts of the study were very positive (6.2). The chapter includes a section on looking to the future (6.3) and what my contribution of knowledge is and finally includes a synopsis of my overall argument (6.4) and reflections (6.5) and finishes with a short closing remark (6.6).

# Chapter 2: Literature Review.

# 2.1 Introduction.

As highlighted in the introduction to the thesis (1.6), curriculum changes in the early childhood sector in Hong Kong have had an impact on choices parents have regarding their children’s education. These curriculum changes are discussed within this chapter. Hong Kong parental values have not been considered in the past when deciding on pedagogical approaches for kindergartens (Chen, Li, and Wang, 2017). Hong Kong exhibits a complicated pedagogical landscape in which early childhood education practitioners as well as parents must steer through the constraints of a rich, historical Confucian culture (Sun, 2008). The key studies from the literature will be drawn upon to consider the complex range of influences that might shape educational choices parents make for their young children.

# 2.1.1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

This chapter critically reviews the literature which will examine the early childhood education options historically and more recently. When initially researching parental values and topics associated with parental values, it became apparent that there was a considerable gap in the available literature. Therefore, this literature draws on wider international literature as well as literature more local to Hong Kong to inform the findings of this thesis. The inclusion criteria for the literature contained aspects of local historical educational changes and adaptations to the educational system and curriculum as well as historical cultural changes within Hong Kong. Another inclusion criterion were to gain an understanding of dominant discourses related to parental values with the main focus on parental values and the children attending or about to attend an early childhood setting. I excluded material regarding parental educational values which was dated further back then the year 2000. I felt that due to more recent educational, government policies and reform of the Hong Kong early childhood education system these may have been outdated.

The literature discussed below discusses this background information. Through engagement with these historical, cultural and curriculum contexts as well as parental values I was able to gain a clearer understanding in how these varied aspects impacted on parental values and the choices parents make for their children regards their educational journey

The chapter starts with an introduction to contextual information that highlights historical changes, which have had an impact in Hong Kong’s society and parental values (2.1). I continue by highlighting some of the Hong Kong historical context, which gives a deeper comprehension of the general history of Hong Kong and the impact migration has had on the values within Hong Kong (2.2). This then leads into an understanding of wider values (2.3). I then discuss what this term means in general before delving deeper into the meaning of global perspectives on parental values (2.4). The chapter includes a section on parental values and the early education systems (2.5), before discussing the competitive nature of Early Childhood Education in Hong Kong (2.6), and the wide choice of types of provision available to parents and children as well as how an early choice of setting impacts the child’s wider education in the future as well as the concept of ‘winning at the starting line’. Cultural values are then discussed (2.7) to show the impact culture has on decisions parents make as well as how the influx of western immigrants (2.8) has changed some of the cultural landscape. This is followed by a section on the values of Hong Kong, and particularly the Confucian values.

In the next section I will discuss the historical context of Hong Kong as it relates to how culture was shaped within Hong Kong and this culture as we can see in later sections (2.7), has had an impact on academic values for participants in this study.

# 2.2 The impact of the historical context of Hong Kong.

Historically, Hong Kong has been a part of China, as well as having a period of being ruled by the British. Hong Kong was a Crown colony of the United Kingdom (UK), with a strong history of Chinese cultures as well as British colonial influences (Lee, 2014). Before 1841, Hong Kong was populated by many farmers and fishermen, who were governed by Chinese landowning groups and had strong Chinese values. These values were rooted in Confucian teachings, for example, the relationships and obligations within families and their limited association with people outside the family (Sussman, 2011). The United Kingdom acquired Hong Kong Island from China in 1842 which ended the opium war and established a trading treaty between China and the United Kingdom. Twenty years later the United Kingdom agreed terms to lease other parts of Hong Kong on a ninety-nine-year lease which ended in 1997 (Brown and Loh, 2002). Hong Kong now exists as part of the People’s Republic of China under the ‘One Country, Two Systems’ (Overholt, 2019: 2) concept which embraces the political, monetary, and economic independence from China for Hong Kong, therefore the Hong Kong government retains independent executive, legislative and judiciary powers until the planned end of the agreement in the year 2047 (O'Connor, 2014). Hong Kong citizens have different rights from citizens of mainland China, including freedom of assembly, free speech, and protected freedom of the press. However, to contradict this, the China government still holds a range of legal control over Hong Kong as judges are employed by the Chief Executive (who is vetted in Beijing) and ‘article 158 holds that the National People’s Congress Standing Committee has the final power in interpreting the Basic Law.’ (Business Review at Berkeley, 2019, NP). This shows a power imbalance and the impact of article 158 means that the Chinese government can extradite people from Hong Kong if they are deemed to be ‘political dissenters or pro-democratic protesters’ (Business Review at Berkeley, 2019, NP).

# 2.2.1 Impact of migration on Hong Kong values.

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region was agreed in 1984 but did not come into effect until 1997 when Hong Kong was ‘returned to the motherland’ (Xinhua, 2017, online-np). During this time there was a mass movement of people, with emigration and immigration as Chinese residents in Hong Kong who were unsure of the future, emigrated to other countries, including the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, America, and Singapore. Later, many of these emigrants returned to Hong Kong with new identities and passports (Sung, 1985; Yang and Elisseeff,1986). During this time (between 1984 and 1997) Hong Kong also saw a great influx of immigrants who were looking for economic gain. This changed the landscape of Hong Kong, and the original values held and started to change into a more complex amalgamation of Confucian and western values (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). By 1999 there was a change in attitude from Hong Kong employers who demanded that their employees were better prepared for the work they undertook. With this came the expectation of higher qualifications and better skills, leading the government to look towards other countries to see how education was delivered worldwide. This emphasis on education resulted in a move away from rote learning and a didactic approach towards a more creative and interactive curriculum (NCEE, ND). Therefore, to accomplish economic gain, it became necessary to achieve educational attainment gains (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). Within this concept of seizing opportunities, there remained a common perspective in the importance of learning and education amongst the Hong Kong population (Cheng, 2004). The societal changes observed in the Chinese immigrant population of people who moved to Hong Kong had an impact on parental perception of social change, especially the perception of transformations in work related demands and competencies which impacted on the shifting values (Chen, et al., 2010). This belief in social change impacted on parental beliefs about how to bring up their children and the importance ‘of shifting toward a more child-centred, independence-oriented form of parenting consistent with a general shift toward individualism’ ([Chen, et al., 2010](https://www-ncbi-nlm-nih-gov.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/pmc/articles/PMC5640975/#B15): 269).

This shift in the perception of work-related demands and the results-oriented mentality which is still fundamental to Hong Kong’s work culture (Cheung, 2023), impacted on the notion of the importance of academic achievement to enable the child to reach those demands and competencies.  [Lai, et al., (2000](https://www-ncbi-nlm-nih-gov.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/pmc/articles/PMC5640975/" \l "B36)), highlight however that Hong Kong is still heavily affected by Confucian traditions and culture, and that therefore parenting styles and behaviours may not be as influenced by social and economic occurrences, which could be work related. However, more recent developments of political changes during 2019 and 2020, within Hong Kong, including the recent moves by China to take back some political control by imposing a National Security Law (Maizland, 2022) may have seen changes in attitudes.

# 2.2.2 The impact of historical Confucian values.

A keyhistorical Confucian value displayed within the Hong Kong community, is the relationship with people outside the family and here, historically, there was a demonstration of ‘harmonious social relationships and the avoidance of conflict’ (Sussman, 2011:13). To achieve this there was conformity and compliance to persons in authority. Many of the Chinese values brought into Hong Kong by the then local Chinese inhabitants in the early days, included the belief that the need of the social group was more important than the need and aspirations of the individual (Lau,1981). Giguere et al., (2010:NP) discuss the phenomena that parents who have emigrated from China into Hong Kong are ‘frozen at the time when they emigrated from their country of origin’, hence the importance of the social group. The endeavour to find stability between Chinese tradition and Hong Kong cultural values in parenting may be characteristic to the immigrant experience ([Tamis-Le Monda, et al., 2008](https://ovidsp-dc2-ovid-com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/ovid-b/ovidweb.cgi?QS2=#136)), and might in reality impact more on further parental control than in non-immigrant families ([Nguyen, et al., 2017](https://ovidsp-dc2-ovid-com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/ovid-b/ovidweb.cgi?QS2=#122)).

The difficulty of acculturation and the settlement of parents in their new place of living had an impact on the values parents instilled in their children, who adapted in a different manner than their parents, to their new place of living and the culture of that place (Leung and Karnilowicz, 2009). This could have caused intergenerational family conflict and an increased dependence on holding on to parental control and associated values (Lau, 2010 and Nguyen, et al, 2017).

One of the values shown by parents is ‘Guan,’ which has two meanings: ‘to govern’ and ‘to love.’ Chao (2001) has discussed this as an important culturally specific definition of parental control, Chao further highlights that control and discipline are regarded as an imperative parental duty. The parental control shown by Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong has widely been regarded to have had an enhanced impact on child development and youth academic achievements ([Lamborn, Dornbusch, and Steinberg,1996](https://ovidsp-dc2-ovid-com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/ovid-b/ovidweb.cgi?QS2=#111); [Kim and Rohner, 2002](https://ovidsp-dc2-ovid-com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/ovid-b/ovidweb.cgi?QS2=#107); [Chao and Aque, 2009](https://ovidsp-dc2-ovid-com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/ovid-b/ovidweb.cgi?QS2=#86)). Chao and Aque (2009) discuss that the impact of parental control in Asian families, is seen by the children as a loving attribute, Chao and Aque (2009) further highlight that their perception of expressions of ‘negative emotions’ such as anger are felt by parents to be inappropriate. Wong et al. (2019: 835) state that they found ‘a direct positive effect of parental behaviour control on academic outcome’ for their children. Lee, et al., (2012) highlight that parental behaviour control can have an impact on objective guided behaviour. This can in turn have an impact on behaviours regarded as problematic, such as absenteeism, school non-conformity and law-breaking as well as internalising problems, which could then have a positive impact on academic performance. This notion of the impact of parental behaviour control is echoed widely (Barber, Olsen, and Shagle, 1994;Barber, Stoltz, and Olsen, 2005;Gray and Steinberg, 1999**;**Walker-Barnes and Mason, 2004). For example, by instilling self-efficacy through parental control, as seen in the Chinese Confucian culture, the children tend to have more self-belief in their own ability to reach specific goals and therefore this may lead to developing better academic outcomes and developmental aspects (Wong, et al., 2019).

# 2.2.3 The interregnum of governmental reign.

The people in Hong Kong are affected by mainland China’s political position, which is set by the Chinese government, or supported by members of the Hong Kong government who are chosen by the Chinese government, and therefore disparities have been at the forefront of political discontent in Hong Kong (Tung Chee-hwa, 2018). As part of the People’s Republic of China’s ‘One Country, Two Systems’ (O'Connor, 2014: 23) arrangement, Hong Kong has political, monetary, and economic independence from China. These elements of independence indicate that the Hong Kong government retains independent executive, legislative and judiciary powers until the end of the agreement in the year 2047 (O'Connor, 2014).

This interregnum of governmental reign has an impact on education as the Hong Kong government can, during this period, make its own legislative policies and does not at this moment in time, adhere to the educational policies set by China. However, there have been recent (2019/2020) concerns that these freedoms such as freedom of assembly, free speech, and freedom of the press, have been impacted by the Chinese government. The Hong Kong leader, the Chief Executive is elected by 1200-member election committee (Chan,1997). Most of this committee is formed by pro-Beijing committee members and not all members of the legislative body in Hong Kong are elected by Hong Kong voters but are chosen by pro- Beijing lawmakers (Cheung, 30 January 2019)*.*

# 2.3 Shared understanding of wider values.

To gain a shared understanding of values, it is important to explore the term ‘values’ itself. The term ‘values’ can be regarded in many ways (Hofstede: 2001; Cheah and Rubin, 2003; Park and Cheah, 2005; Carpendale, et al., 2018). For example, to explain the general term values in more depth, it is said that:

Values are basic and fundamental beliefs that guide or motivate attitudes or actions. They help us to determine what is important to us. Values describe the personal qualities we choose to embody to guide our actions; the sort of person we want to be, the way we treat ourselves and others, and our interaction with the world around us. They provide the general guidelines for conduct. Mintz (2018: online, np)

Values can be described as ‘stable long-lasting beliefs about what is important to a person. They become standards by which people order their lives and make their choices’ (IAA, 2023: Online, NP). These can be personal values or shared values within a community. Hofstede (2001) deliberates values as part of a cultural construct. ‘Values are held by individuals as well as by collective; culture presupposes a collectively’ (p,5). Hofstede (2001) uses this concept as a basic version of a previous anthropological definition by Kluckhohn (1967) and Rokeach (1972), who both discuss the notion that values are concepts, which can be described as individual as well as a collective characteristic of a group or individual, these have been shaped by their personal and social existence and by ‘available modes, means and ends of actions’ (Kluckhohn, 1967: 395). This notion indicates that there is a broader value classification in place which influences personal values. Values can be seen as good and desirable or be the opposite and have a negative influence on a person or society. Not all values and beliefs are classed as positive.

In Hong Kong, due to the arrival of people from around the world (Sussman, 2011; Ren and Edwards, 2017), some values have been altered over time from a Confucian value system to a shared western values system (or a hybrid of these two). Hofstede (2001) additionally identifies three modes of values: ‘Those dealing with our relationships with: (1) other people, (2) things (our non-human environment), and (3) our own inner selves and God.’ (Hofstede, 2001:8). This supports the discourse discussed historically by Kluckhohn (1967) and Rokeach (1972), who indicate that values can be individual or shared. Therefore, values can be linked to family, culture, or education. Carpendale et al. (2018) discuss links to an educational notion within values and claims that schooling (within educational settings) is a moral enterprise and therefore cannot be value neutral. Educational settings have a major influence on values as they bring together the values and beliefs of the school as well as the individual teachers, alongside the values of the families. The wider influence of the media, the peer group of the children and society at large all influence values during children’s developmental years (Halstead and Taylor, 1996.)

Kohlberg (1984) historically deliberates the term ‘Value Clarification’ and looks at the notion that, examples set by teachers and cultural surroundings in which the child learns, enable children to explore and clarify their own values, He terms this ‘character education’. The term ‘Value Clarification’ is also used more recently by Kirchenbaum (2013), who uses the term ‘values’ for wider purposes such as ‘clarifying their [people] goals priorities and values, make decisions and implementing changes in their [people] lives’ (p,3). This notion of clarifying values is important as it will inform parents of the values used within certain educational systems such as different kindergartens in Hong Kong. Here we can see, for example, that the introduction of a child centred approach which is delivered through a play-based method (Curriculum Development Council, 2006; Cheng, et al., 2015), which was first introduced in 1991 by the Hong Kong government, may have an impact on parental values and beliefs, as parents may hold on to their academic approach to education in the early years for their children. Carpendale, et al., (2018) argue that these values as discussed by Kohlberg, can result in conflicting moral rules. For example, parents who hold values of gaining knowledge and working hard to gain high academic attainment, may not engage with the child-centred approach as this may appear to them to be of a low moral educational standard and not fit into their beliefs of attainment. Here we can see a moral value which is personal, and a parent will have a value that something is either right or wrong and pass this value or belief on to their children for example, work hard to gain better results. We can also distinguish extrinsic and intrinsic values. An intrinsic value is a value such as honesty and kindness, so it is a value, for its own good, whereas an extrinsic value such as for example, wealth and fame is Doing something for a different reason (a means to an end product) (Vilkka, 1997, Hirose and Olson, 2018). So, gaining academic attainment could be an extrinsic value. The next section will clarify the diverse perspectives on parental values.

# 2.4 Global perspectives on parental values.

The development of children starts from conception and continues during everyday interactions with parents or main caregivers from the day they are born. During the first years of a child’s life, rapid development in cognitive, emotional, social and language skills take place and parents are very influential in this development (Bornstein and Tamis-Le Monda, 2010). These early interactions between parents and children also convey early cultural lessons and development which support the integration into the cultural world and community the child lives in (Bornstein and Landsford, 2010). Confucian principles often underlie and guide the cultural values of parents in Hong Kong (Sussman, 2011; Ludo, Tamis-Le Monda and Song, 2013). Globally it can be observed that parental values have social, cultural, and environmental reality (Tudge, et al., 2000). Parental values have an impact on how parents are trying to shape their child’s development and their parenting actions impact on the future of their child. Actions which influence behaviours and social interactions are often guided by social realities (Miguel, et al., 2012). Therefore, to enable parents to express and communicate values and their cultural impact to their children they need to have an awareness of the values they are portraying, as well as an understanding of the importance of various values to themselves as parents, to their family, their wider community and the cultural environment they find themselves in.

Culture is a perception that incorporates the [social actions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_behavior), [organisations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institution), and [standards](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_norm) found in [human](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human) [societies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Society), as well as the ’[knowledge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knowledge), [beliefs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belief), [customs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_norm), capabilities, and [habits](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Habit) of the individuals in these groups’ (Edward,1871: NP). Social reality or social determinism within the wider community is often determined by culture. Culture can often be traced back to a specific region or location. According to Geertz (2017), the role of culture is to influence values in the world and make values understandable. Social determinism and cultural concepts have an impact on how children are brought up and which values and beliefs get instilled into them. In Hong Kong it can be observed that there is an amalgamation of local and global cultures which have shared and individual values. These values and cultures determine the path parents set out for their children.

Whilst parental personal values and knowledge are the main aspects which determine choices parents make for their children, there will be elements of social class and peer influences, but ultimately it is the parent who decides their child’s future in regards early childhood education. The Centre for Parenting Education (Centreforparenting.org: NP), highlights that ’values are very important in parenting since they deeply influence all behaviours and attitudes and affect our decisions and relationships.’ Kohlberg (1984) discussed conflicting moral rules or intrinsic values, these conflicts can be observed within families as values are very personal, held with great conviction at times and can have a great impact on parental behaviour in how to raise their children. At times this may instigate a clash between cultural and personal values, Jose, et al., (2000) elucidate the necessity to comprehend the difference amid the values implicit in collective and individual traits. To explain this further Jose, et al., (2000) give the following examples, collective values parents may have as a social parenting group could be the traits of ‘persistence, obedience, politeness, respect’ (p,688). These traits can be considered as a collective value which parents have taken on as social reality. The individual values and traits could be ‘self-confidence, sociability, creativity, or independence (p, 688).

This thesis seeks to establish if parents share collective values or if the values they hold can be seen as individual. If values are collective these can be more easily incorporated within various early childhood settings, such as kindergartens, however collective and individual values can also cause fundamental struggles for parents. Therefore, these collective and individual traits might create a moral conflict. This possible moral conflict which might be triggered by social representations, does not account ’for the behaviour of individuals per se, but only for the behaviour of individual as members of social groups’ (Miguel et al, 2012:1164). Parental values can consequently conceivably be determined by social representation and/or collective values.

Parental values and belief systems are frequently seen as emphasising child rearing objectives, Cheah and Rubin (2003) and Park and Cheah (2005), highlight that the motives of parental emphasis on the importance of these objectives is not researched in a wider context. Through time, parenting values and goals are frequently developed in the context of a cultural approach and heritage and are often developed to fit in with social constructs (Goodnow, 2002). These parental values and wider social values become entwined within a belief system which in turn transmits these cultural values to the next generation (Keller, et al., 2003). Arguably the social and cultural values will influence the intrinsic values which parents hold. Whilst extrinsic values such as academic achievement and gaining employment later in life can be seen as an important aspect of the child’s future. In the context of this thesis, it is important to understand the wider context of parental values and how this is intertwined with wider societal and cultural values and beliefs in particular relation to Hong Kong in 2020.

# 2.5 Parental values and early education systems.

Parental values can significantly influence the choices parents make for their children regarding kindergarten settings in Hong Kong.  In Hong Kong there is a variety of possible educational approaches within early childhood settings which all operate under their own value systems. In this context there are wider opportunities for parents in Hong Kong to see how their values fit within the values of individual kindergartens as well as looking at the broader systems set up by the Hong Kong government. Parents can decide which values and priorities they feel are more important for their child. All early year’s settings in Hong Kong are privately run (1.7). A curriculum is available through the Education Bureau, and early years settings in Hong Kong get inspected and supported on aspects of curriculum, teaching approaches and school administration by inspectors from the Education Bureau. Prospective kindergartens gain statutory requirement and recommendation information from the ‘Operation Manual for Pre-primary Institutions,’ this manual however does not include values/beliefs which should be held at the settings (Education Bureau, 2019, online). The competitive nature of these kindergarten options for parents will be discussed in the following section.

# 2.6 Competitive nature of ECE in Hong Kong.

Parents in Hong Kong have wider choices of variations of early childhood provision available to them (EDB, 2019). It is necessary to understand that all children in Hong Kong undergo some form of selection process to ‘gauge their social, cognitive, and linguistic abilities’ (Davis, 2019: online) before starting at a kindergarten, therefore parents often put their child’s name down for several kindergartens (1.7).

In Hong Kong, the pre-primary education a child attends, has a direct impact on which primary school they will attend in the future, so the choice of kindergarten is not made lightly. Although there is a greater variety of choice (1.6), the need for selection processes, which are referred to as interviews in Hong Kong, costs implications and travel, all have an impact on the choices parents can realistically make for their child.

Benny (2023) discusses children’s interviews in Hong Kong, pointing out that although the word ‘interview’ is used and therefore sets the tone for the seriousness of the task, interviews are informal and mostly based on observing the child undertake informal activities with the aim to:

See the children in action so they can assess their abilities and gain an insight into their proficiency and personality. (Benny, 2023: online np).

Benny (2023) further notes that the educational setting is seeking to establish if the school and the child are a good fit in terms of their personality and regarding the child’s engagement with the approaches to learning within the setting.

The South China Morning Post newspaper has discussed this phenomena regarding having children undertake interviews to gain a place in a kindergarten, Lam (2018) highlights the preparation parents undertake to get their children through the interviews, and highlights that some parents prepare resumés, attend workshops as well as writing tutorials to ensure their child gains a place in a certain kindergarten. Lam (2018: NP*)* states that:

International kindergartens usually have longer interview sessions and allocate more time to group play sections; whereas local kindergartens are shorter, and usually only consist of parent-accompanied chats and easy tasks. (South China News article 29-May-2018).

This highlights that the tasks the children are asked to undertake do not reflect an official interview approach. Tse (2020) states:

Facing fierce competition for a place in a prestigious kindergarten, parents perhaps have no choice but to pull out all stops to prepare their children for the formal interviews. So perhaps we should instead point the finger at the culture of having interviews with preschool children in the first place. (Tse, South China News article 15-October-2020).

All kindergartens and schools undertake some form of interview and appear to have different approaches to what stage of development a child should be at to gain a place. However, the cultural aspects of undertaking interviews at kindergarten, primary school, and secondary school, have given a sense of gravity to these encounters. According to Benny (2023), educational settings undertake the interviews as they need to ensure that the child if accepted can ‘keep up with the curriculum’ (online; no page). This statement could open a whole new discussion regarding children’s development. Benny (2023: online) further states:

Schools in Hong Kong are looking for students with a good attitude towards learning and families who will enhance the school community. If the children behave badly during the assessment process or display behaviour not declared in the application form, they’re unlikely to be accepted. If, on the other hand, they display enthusiasm and a willingness to learn and the skills mentioned earlier, they should meet the requirements. (np)

This notion of showing certain behaviours during an ‘interview’ would add a lot of pressure to parents to ensure their child fits into these categories and for children who have additional needs this would mean that they may not have provision for their child in a setting they would have chosen.

In more general terms there are discussions of parental choices as can be seen by Lubienski (2008) who discusses the reasons why parents should be able to make those choices of pre-primary and primary education for their child. By discussing the notion that parents know the strengths and weaknesses of their child, as well as that the families want to reinforce their values (which they practise at home) in their children whilst they are in an educational setting. Feinberg and Lubienski, (2008, p2) also highlight the ‘a degree of consumer-driven, market-style competition’ which is injected by parental choices into the educational school market. Economically this should increase the incentives for the educational market to provide better services and quality (Kahlenberg, 2003). Watkins (2009) discusses the notion that elitism is culturally and socially encouraged, and this is related to educational and academic success as a way of expanding progress and success. Ren and Edwards (2017), further highlight that the expectation of Chinese parents is that early years settings teach children pre-academic skills (reading, maths, writing) as well as ensuring their engagement with wider learning activities and after school extra-curricular activities, this extrinsic value is ‘to ensure their children do not fall behind at the starting line.’ (Ren and Edwards, 2017:1053). According to Wong and Rao (2015: 2):

Tutorial classes and playgroups for learning reading and mathematics are also common for pre-primary children even for infants as young as 6 months old.

This is a developmentally challenging task as children aged 6 months are not developmentally able to read or write so the presumptions of what young children should be able to comprehend are unrealistic.

The existing concept of early childhood, and quality amongst the Chinese culture, is perceived as a time of training with plentiful exercises to improve and expand on skills (Rao and Chan, 2009; Watkins, 2009; Chua, 2011). Therefore, in Hong Kong the perception of a ‘good’ early years setting/ kindergarten, is one which can provide and stimulate children’s development and prepare them for their chosen ‘good’ primary school and further down the line a ‘good’ secondary school. Most parents in Hong Kong are trying to enable their children to get ahead in the academic game, by having a competitive edge (winning at the starting line, 1.7.1), (Cheung, 2009; Chua, 2011), and therefore having a good chance of one of the places in a ‘good’ primary school (Chan and Chan 2002; Yuen, 2005; Pearson and Rao 2006; Rao, Ng, and Pearson 2009; Cheung 2009; Fung and Lam 2009; Ng 2013).This concept of transitioning through life being able to attend ’good’ schools was reiterated during a study by Yuen and Grieshaber (2009), who interviewed eighty-six Chinese parents with children aged three years old who had just made a choice of kindergarten for their children, whilst using the new voucher system. These parents agreed with the ‘happy child’ interpretation the government was encouraging but concurrently they clearly expressed the view that they looked for an academic and pedagogical curriculum for their three-year-old children to enable them to transition to a ‘good’ primary school at a later stage. The study further showed that parents of a lower income bracket had a higher inclination to define quality in the sense of academic achievement and learning.

Other factors discussed by Yuen and Grieshaber (2009) were stress and the time it took to undertake homework. Respondents were asked about which aspect of development they felt was most important for their children, with character, health and wellness and self-care skills being the main responses; only 4.5% of respondents highlighted academic achievement as an important aspect. However, 89% of respondents said they believed that the notion of ‘winning from the starting line’ was a common concept within Hong Kong.

The Yuen and Grieshaber (2009) study illustrate the importance of academic success within the Hong Kong community, parents reported that there is too much pressure on their children to achieve but at the same time they asserted this pressure themselves to ensure their child was ahead of the academic game by ensuring an appropriate kindergarten education for their child, which leads into a ‘good’ primary school for their child.

The cultural importance of the role of parenting in relation to Chinese motivation and academic achievements has been widely discussed (Chen, et al., 1995; Leung, et al., 1998; Chao and Tseng, 2002; Phillipson and Phillipson, 2007). To gain a deeper understanding of choices made by parents in Hong Kong it is beneficial to start to understand their values and how these impact on choices parents make for their children in regards educational aspects.

This section has discussed the Pre-Primary education which is available within Hong Kong, including: the three-year free education system for kindergarten aged children (age three to six); provision of a voucher system to enable parents to obtain and negotiate a place in a kindergarten which they believed was suitable for their child and in line with personal values; and a commitment to enabling changes in quality and teacher qualifications for the early childhood education sector, which was linked to the voucher system (Daniels and Trebilcock, 2005; Steuerle, 2000; Wong and Rao, 2020). The next section will explore how culture has an impact on the values and the beliefs of the parents in Hong Kong.

# 2.7 Cultural values, and the influx of western values in Hong Kong.

To gain some wider understanding of the impact culture has on people and the country they live in we need to look at the work of Geertz (1973). Geertz is best known for his concept of "thick description," which emphasizes the importance of context in understanding cultural practices. He argued that culture is not just a set of symbols or behaviours but a system of meanings that people create and share. In his famous work *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Geertz asserted that culture is a web of symbols and meanings that gives life its significance. He believed that to understand a culture, one must engage deeply with the local context, interpreting the layers of meaning that inform social life. Sewell (1999) on the other hand emphasises the interaction between culture and the social structure. Sewell (1999) argued that culture should be understood as both a system of signs and a set of practices that people enact. Sewell challenged the idea that culture is merely a reflection of social structures, suggesting instead that culture can influence social structures and individual behaviour. His focus on the agency of individuals within cultural frameworks allows for a more nuanced understanding of how culture shapes and is shaped by social interactions. These interactions of differing cultural influences can be seen in Hong Kong where the coming together of different nationalities have shaped the culture. Parsons (1991) proposed that societies are composed of interrelated parts, where culture serves as a guiding framework that informs social behaviour. Parsons focussed on the role of culture in promoting social order. All three of these concepts by Geertz (2017), Sewell (2008) and Parsons (1991) show some links to local contexts in culture as well as the social aspects and the practices which people undertake. Hong Kong has a very rich history of varying cultures which have come together in one place, and these determine how peoples’ individual behaviours, values and cultural notions are influenced. Some of these cultural aspects are related to educational practices and these are discussed in the next section.

# 2.7.1 Educational practices and the impact of the wider cultural influx.

Hong Kong has adopted educational practices from England and other countries, and wider theoretical frameworks throughout the world (Wong and Rao, 2015). This has resulted in Hong Kong teachers using a hybrid pedagogical adaptation between traditional Chinese pedagogies and contemporary early childhood pedagogies (Chen, Li, and Wang, 2017). Hong Kong has implemented a variety of western-derived pedagogies (Chen, Li, and Wang, 2017).

Due to sociocultural incompatibilities between Chinese and western contexts, the actual implementation of these pedagogical methods in Hong Kong has largely yielded little success (Chen, Li, and Wang 2017:324).

Whilst these different pedagogies may create some confucian within the kindergarten settings, it makes Hong Kong Pre-school education and notions of values attached to parental beliefs and kindergartens such a fascinating topic to research.

As previously highlighted (1.2 and 1.6), the Hong Kong government brought in the Pre-Primary Education voucher scheme (PEVS) (Education and Manpower Bureau 2006a, 15–16), and this scheme was designed to support quality within the settings as well as enabling parents to have a choice of pre-primary education. This scheme was eventually replaced with the Free Quality Kindergarten Education Scheme (FQKES) in 2017 (Education Bureau 2016a), this will be discussed in more detail in the next section. The schemes (PEVS and FQKES) adhered to The United Nations (2015) Sustainable Development Goal Target which stipulates the requirements for governments globally to ensure that all young children have at least one-year free ‘quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education’.

To gain wider understanding of this approach and parental values associated with or linked to early childhood, the changing identities of the country and its people need to be examined. There appears to be a cultural orientation towards education in which parents put high value on academic achievement (Ren and Edwards, 2017).

To explain this further there needs to be knowledge of the background of the residents in Hong Kong. Many individual residents in Hong Kong often have a joint identity, a Chinese heritage as well as the birth right in Hong Kong (Sussman, 2011). A further phenomenon is also described as a ‘fluid identity’ (Heng, 2017:38), as many Hong Kong citizens are from a wide range of international, economic, and educational backgrounds. Historically Hong Kong has seen migrants from all over the world and this has led to cross cultural perceptions within the individuals as well as a perception of cultural value differences (Shengtao Wu, 2019). This amalgamation of the wide influx of global residents in Hong Kong also implies that values from a wider, global community are being shared and the historically strong Confucian values are diluted, or given wider meaning, therefore changing parental values over generations. Confucian values will be discussed in more depth in section 2.8.1.

A 2009 educational reform of Senior Secondary Liberal Studies (‘‘Liberal Studies,’’ or SSLS), which became part of the curriculum in 2009 in Hong Kong schools, evidenced the importance of understanding global values when they included teaching to:

Demonstrate an appreciation for the values of their own and other cultures, and for universal values, and be committed to becoming responsible and conscientious citizens.

(CDC, 2007/2014: 5–6)

Education is valued differently in different societies, these different values have an impact on how children are brought up and how education is perceived (Salili, Chiu, and Lai, [2001](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01443410601104130?scroll=top&needAccess=true&role=tab&aria-labelledby=full-article)).

Families and in particular parents, form the foundations of cultural development. In Hong Kong this is often based on the heritage of Confucian beliefs and amalgamated with western approaches. There are still some beliefs amongst the Asian community that ‘no pain, no gain,’ ‘scolding builds character,’ and ‘failure is the result of laziness’ (Watkins and Biggs, [2001:](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01443410601104130?scroll=top&needAccess=true&role=tab&aria-labelledby=full-article)2).

Chan and Elliott (2004) discuss however that Hong Kong born Chinese parents, especially the younger generation, adopt a more ‘laissez‐faire parenting style’ (Chan and Elliot, 2004:138) in comparison with their peers from mainland China. Whilst this may be true for some parents, it would be advisable to remember that not all parents in Hong Kong are from a Chinese background. The globalised influx of residents has had an impact on these views.

To further discuss this phenomenon of the hybrid nature of values and cultural influences of the joint or fluid identity in perspective we need to discuss some of the wider global values and Hong Kong construed values, which can be seen in the next section.

# 2.8 Global Values and Hong Kong interpreted values.

Current global economies and shifting identities, have increased pressure on policymakers, and on educational managers, to ensure they access and engage with best educational and developmental practice from around the world (OECD 2019, OECD 2022).

The global notion of children and early childhood education as human capital has long been recognised as benefitting the economy in a broader sense (Schweinhart, et al., 2005). This has then become an economic value which impacts on the educational values (OECD, 2006; Heckman, 2006). Pressure worldwide, linked with children’s attainment and a comparison of global educational outcomes, has heightened significantly (Mc Ness, et al., 2015). For this thesis, I am specifically interested in the values linked with kindergarten and childcare options. However, it is essential to include broader influences which impact these values, because these will impact on choices parents make for their children, influences such as cultural notions, economic and political aspects. As has been highlighted (1.5 and 1.6), the literature indicates that generally, parents in Hong Kong have strong beliefs in the importance of educational attainment. This phenomena of global outcomes and measurements is evidenced by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (2018) which is a worldwide study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The PISA scale evaluates educational systems by assessing 15-year-old school pupils' educational performance on mathematics, science, and reading. The outcomes are then presented by country and a score for each subject is given; thus, ranking all PISA-participating countries. Since 2000, over ninety countries have participated in this educational evaluation thereby heightening the global comparison phenomena (OECD, 2018). Parental values for children have not been considered within the PISA scales and these values have been overlooked, and important aspects of the children’s developmental journey seem to have been lost to international benchmarking. This has been designed by international experts who take into account some of the cultural needs of children, however these look more specifically at areas of attainment, assessment and performance targets rather than at the values and beliefs of the children, their families and their community (Mc Ness, et al., 2015).

The PISA rankings are said to be interrelated with economic success and an indicator of how well the education system prepares children for the global economy (Asiasociety.org, online). The OECD (2019: Table II.6.50), highlights that 64% of three to four-year-old children in Hong Kong were in education or in early years settings in comparison to only 20% of children of the same age in England. This is an indicator of the importance, and values parents put on children’s education as well as the parental need to be in work and therefore using the educational setting as childcare. As discussed, (2.8.1) Asian/Hong Kong parents are found to place a strong emphasis on academic performance (Jensen, 2013 and Hogan, 2014), and mass media similarly reports on the PISA 2009 and 2012 suggest ‘Asian cultural practices and schooling systems as effective models to ensure excellence in learning outcomes’ (Lee, 2015:162). Here we can see the complex context of influences, such as Asian cultural practices of high attainment, and the need for a strong knowledge base which drive parental choices.

Cultural backgrounds will have an influence on parental values and the values of education in the eyes of the family which can have an impact on how academic expectations are communicated by the parents and how children perceive these (Chen and Lan, 1998). The position of values and value education has been stressed in various international and national documents which relate to or regulate the specialism and area of education (OECD,2012; UNESCO, 2014). The Curriculum in Hong Kong, as set by the EDB (Education Bureau, 2000) does not explicitly include values but does state that the curriculum should:

Provide students with a school curriculum which enables them to construct knowledge and develop a global outlook to cope with the changing and interdependent world in the 21st century.

(EDB, Curriculum: online: 2000)

This statement emphasises the global economy and need for high attainment. The OECD (2019) highlights that education from early childhood is important to equip children with skills needed to succeed in a future global world, however it lacks a discussion regarding values which may need to be considered for each different culture to achieve the educational aims. If values were included more prominently, it would give a clearer overview for parents to make their choice for their children. It would also show the global world which values were deemed important in Hong Kong. The document discusses ‘supporting individuals to develop as persons, citizens, and professionals’ (OECD, 2019:13), but discusses skills and competencies instead of values.

# 2.8.1 Confucian values.

Confucianism is sometimes seen as a religion and sometimes as a philosophy but is inherently ‘a way of life’ and a set of ethical beliefs. It represents a multifaceted system of ‘moral, social, political, and philosophical rules and thoughts’ (Park and Chesla, 2007:297).

One specific aspect that has been influential on Chinese parents, (and is still strongly present, within the Hong Kong community), are the Confucian principles of knowledge, modesty, self-restraint, filial piety, and harmonious relationships. These principles guide and underpin Hong Kong parental views (Luo, et al., 2013). Confucianism has been influential in the Chinese community for centuries and due to global movement, can be seen in many countries. Confucianism impacts on Hong Kong parents, as the emphasis is on the parental role in fostering the developmental process of their children but can also be witnessed within educational settings (Park and Chesla, 2017).

Confucian values are one of the lenses through which parents in Hong Kong see their cultural values (Brookfield, 2017). It is therefore important to provide a brief overview of these principles, it is also imperative to understand that the principles have changed through time and that particular values may be seen differently in different parts of the world, therefore we cannot see them through stereotypical lenses, which may be outdated (Tung, 2014).

In this thesis, Chinese and Asian Hong Kong resident parents and their children are the focus, with consideration of the wider international Hong Kong community. Most parents form their own communities within Hong Kong, and the interaction of values will have created an amalgamation of Confucian and western value systems. Teaching staff in the various kindergartens also originate from a wide variety of backgrounds and it is therefore very difficult to fully distinguish whose values are more represented and from which background these values have originated. Previously highlighted cultural values can have an important influence on parenting (Goodnow, 2002).

# 2.8.2 Main Confucian principles.

The brief overview which follows aims to provide some understanding of the cultural background of Hong Kong in which this thesis is set. There are six main Confucian principles (Luo, et al., 2013), which have some subdivisions. The six main principles are: Knowledge, Social norms, Modesty, Self-restraint, Filial piety, and Harmonious relationships, these will now be briefly explained:

*Knowledge* is important in Confucianism, which regards the acquisition of knowledge through motivation and effort of the learning process above the outcome, as measured through tests or other assessments. In Confucianism, knowledge is gained through diligence and persistence (Luo, et al., 2013). Here a link can be made with the academic achievement goals parents set for their children, perhaps because of employment pressures or perceptions of discrimination for underachievement. In China and Hong Kong parents feel pressure to ensure their children achieve highly in school (Louie 2001; Li, 2004).

*Social norms* highlight politeness and behavioural expectations (Cheah and Rubin, 2003) and are seen as a developmental goal whereby ‘proper behaviour’ and courtesy are part of respectability. Confucius had the view that people should reflect daily on their own actions to ensure that they consider their mistakes to ensure they did not become too confident in life and should feel shame for any inappropriate behaviour. Wang and Tamis-Le Monda (2003) highlight that the parental goals of Chinese and Asian parents are for their children to absorb and follow the social patterns of their cultural identity.

*Modesty* Confucianism sets an expectation that people should be modest and downplay their achievements. Feeling shame, means they are reflecting on and recognising their failures and limitations (Kim, et al., 2010).

*Self-restraint* is one of the Confucian principles whereby people are expected to show their self-control and follow rules of their own free will (Chen et al, 1998). This partly relates to the use of words and actions (to show restraint) and to behave in a cautious manner and only speak when they are sure of what they are going to say. It also relates to control of their own desires, emotions, and longings especially when they conflict with the group or community (Tamis-Le Monda and McFadden 2010). The value of self-restraint is encouraged by Chinese/Asian parents, and young children are taught self-control from a young age (Ho, 1986; Zhou, et al., 2004). It is believed that Chinese children who are well behaved and mature, are generally shy, cautious, and externally in control (Chen, Rubin, and Li, 1995).

*Filial piety* is a developmental goal which sets the expectancy that children respect and provide for their parents and grandparents through educational attainment and employment achievement. For young children this is seen through obedience and respect for parents even if at times they do not agree with their parents. Children should show these qualities as a way of showing their love for the family (Chen, et al., 2007; Wang, et al., 2010 a). The practice of filial piety is according to Chow (2008) divided into three levels.

The first level includes providing parents with the necessary materials for the satisfaction of their physical needs and comforts, including attending to them when they are ill. The second level includes paying attention to parents’ wishes and obeying their preferences. The third level includes behaving in such a way as to make parents happy and to bringing them honour and the respect of the community (p,30).

*Harmonious relationship* is according to Confucian principles a combined effect between benevolence, respectability, morality, and sincerity. These combined values enable people to uphold good relationships and understand various perceptions as well as being liked by others (Chen and McCollum 2000; McCollum and Chen 2001).

To bring the Confucian principles together it is further expected that parents use ‘Guan’ (2.2), whereby parents need to ensure their children adhere and follow the six Confucian areas. Parents have a responsibility for their children’s achievements, and the related developmental gaols are according to the principles necessary for future success (Luo, Tamis Le-Monda and Song, 2013). ‘Guan’ refers to ‘training,’ as well as ‘teaching or educating children in appropriate or expected behaviours out of care and concern for children’ (Luo, Tamis Le-Monda and Song, 2013: 846). Wong and Rao (2015), discuss the strong influence of Confucian principles and values on parents in regards their children’s education, as these values emphasise academic achievement and diligence. Strict discipline and a pedagogical approach which has an emphasis on academic performance and attainment is very important in Confucian based East Asian education (Baumann, Hamin and Yang, 2016). The education system in Hong Kong in the past placed heavy emphasis on examinations and had a strong competitive nature (Biggs, 1992, Education Commission, 2000). Currently the emphasis in education is focussed on a play-based, child-centred pedagogy (EDB, 2019).

Wong and Rao (2015) further highlight that:

Elitism is socially and culturally encouraged, and education is perceived as a means for upward social mobility. The emphasis on education and competition is further intensified by the Confucian belief that success can be achieved through the exertion of effort regardless of innate ability.

(Wong and Rao, 2015: 2)’.

Such a position shows the importance of academic achievement, as parents will encourage their children to achieve highly in education in order that they can reach the ‘upward social mobility’ as well as ensuring they gain a good income in later years. This position of academia may impact on social or personal values held by the family, or the parent as social mobility and achievement may be felt to be more important.

# 2.9 Chapter Summary.

This chapter has reviewed the literature on the impact curriculum changes and funding brought to the parents of Hong Kong early childhood children. Wider factors which have affected choices parents make for their children such as historical and current beliefs and values, globalised impacts on economic values; funding availability and the impact this has had on the choice of kindergarten, have been discussed. The chapter concludes with a discussion on Confucian principles and beliefs in the context of this thesis, including the impact of these beliefs on values in general within Hong Kong.

Personal and communal values were critically discussed, as influenced by societal and cultural traits (Tudge, et al., 2000). Such values impact on educational settings, and influence which values are passed on to children within those settings. Parents values are often linked closely with cultural values held by the parents and wider society (Goodnow, 2002), and they instil their children with their own values from birth.

In a discussion of extrinsic and intrinsic values the chapter has discussed how such values influence parental choices through their wider social circles and as widely shared cultural values. Finally, the chapter summarised the six Confucian principles as they relate to the focus of this thesis. Confucian values have had a big impact on society in Hong Kong and therefore the values of the people living in Hong Kong. Confucianism represents a multifaceted system of moral, social, political, and philosophical rules and thoughts. Parents who conform to the Confucian principles expect to bring Guan to their children; this means that parents are responsible for their children’s achievements. This is an important aspect in the Confucian cultural values system, as this may have a big impact on which values parents believe to be more important within their lives and that of their children.

Throughout this chapter the literature which highlights a complex range of influences that have shaped parental values, opportunities and choices have been explored and discussed. The individual sections have explored historical changes (2.2) which have had an impact on the Hong Kong society and the parental values as they are currently within Hong Kong. This was followed by a section defining ‘wider values’ (2.3) as they are understood and applied in this thesis. This was followed by a section on the global perspectives on parental values (2.4). I then drew on literature to examine early childhood education in Hong Kong (2.5), particularly in terms of the impact of recent government initiatives including the Pre-Primary Education voucher system (PEVS) linked with the educational early childhood offering of places in kindergartens. The chapter further included a discussion on the role of a range of dynamics in shaping parents’ educational choices for their children, such as the impact of the competitive nature of education (2.6), traditional Chinese values, and the influx of western family values (2.7), these were also discussed within this chapter. Global values and the Hong Kong interpreted values have an impact on economic values of education and these economic values (2.8) further included the Confucian values, followed by Confucian principles to gain a greater understanding of the influence these principles have had on the culture within Hong Kong.

Chapter three focuses on the methodology, research methods and research processes of the study, the rationale for the research, and the theoretical framework which underpins this study.

# Chapter 3: Research methods and methodology.

# 3.1 Introduction.

This chapter presents the research methodology, delineating methodological aspects of the research. The aims of discovery and qualitative research methods are presented within social and cultural contexts. The philosophical approaches are supported by the socio-cultural theory and the bio- ecological theories as these impact on the social and environmental aspects of a child growing up and the choices parents make for their children.

The elements of qualitative research within this thesis are shared between a variety of approaches such as questionnaires and interviews which enable a more generic and flexible view of my enquiries. The aim of the study was to identify, from the perspective of the parents/ carers as well as teachers, which values they believe to be important for the children and how these values have played a part in the choices parents make for their children. Central to achieving meaningful data it was important to have a clear integration of the views of the parents and teachers. By including contextually appropriate and feasible research methods I was able to achieve meaningful data collection.

The sections within this chapter set out and justify the methods and methodology and consider the rationale for the study. The chapter starts with an introduction to the methodology and underpins the context and locality of the study (3.1). The chapter further considers the rationale for the study (3.2). It then further critically discusses the qualitative methods used (3.3), the theoretical approaches which underpin the study (3.4), and the ethical issues surrounding this thesis (3.5). A section on the pilot study and the lessons I learned from this pilot study (3.6), is followed by a description and justification of the research processes (3.7). The chapter further includes an explanation and justification of the questionnaires, and the interviews held with teachers and parents (3.8). I then include a discussion on the generalisability (3.8) of the study followed by the validity, bias, and reliability issues (3.9). The chapter further deliberates the constraints and timeframe that I encountered throughout this study, and it concludes with an explanation and justification of data analysis processes and how I identified the themes (3.10).

The chapter includes a discussion how data were generated via a qualitative method approach and analysed. Nevertheless, the way research is perceived, undertaken and construed is dependent on the theoretical framework and the rationale for choosing that particular methodology and this is discussed in this chapter. To enable a full overview of the research methodology designed for this study, it is important to consider the research question which instigated the research, as well as highlighting the ontological and epistemological conventions which guided the study. To put this into perspective, I have highlighted one of my personal experiences at one of the kindergarten visits in Hong Kong in Box 1. I have highlighted this as it was one of the experiences which sparked my interest into this research, and I felt it was important to emphasise this experience. In this chapter I will further explain how participants were recruited and will give detail of the development, method, and data analysis of the different aspects of the research. Additionally, I will consider the ethical implications of this study and issues relating to consent as well as demographic information of the study in Hong Kong.

On one of the visits I undertook, the early childhood setting was having an open day for prospective parents and children. One mother was carrying a nine-month-old baby, and she was putting the baby’s name down for a place for when she would be two years old, as the setting delivered some (2 hours a week) French language sessions. Neither the mother nor the father was French, or spoke French, but believed that it would be a good skill to have for the child for when she was older. This incident I came across was not an isolated one, as most of the parents I spoke with had similar, quite intentional reasons for choosing a setting for their child. This sparked my interest in what values the parents feel are important for their child’s future and how this has impacted on choices they have made for their child in regards choosing an early years setting.

Box 1, Experiential perspective on kindergarten visit.

# 3.1.1 Context and location of the study.

This thesis was prompted during my informal professional visits to kindergartens in Hong Kong, by incidental observations of parental choices in Hong Kong. I felt that parental aims and values for their children contrasted with my experiences of parental values in England. This thesis aims to examine how parental values in Hong Kong shape perspectives about education and the choices of childcare settings (kindergartens) for their children.

The settings I visited in Hong Kong during my informal professional visits, appeared to have considerable capital to invest in learning resources as well as human resources. As part of my professional development in Hong Kong, after I spoke to parents and teachers/practitioners in the settings I visited, it became apparent that some parents were committed to travel a long way (time and distance) to ensure their child would attend a specific early childhood setting. The reasons for this were different per family, but some initial conversations brought to the forefront that parents chose a setting because they believed their child would gain skills that are more academic from that setting, such as learning a foreign language, science attributes and mathematical skills. These were parents of children aged two years old and they were already looking to the future, and what attributes they believed their children would need to gain a good job in the future.

Whilst exploring literature (Martin and Vincent, 1999; Kraatz, et al., 2020) to try to understand this phenomenon of choosing a specific setting at a very early child age, the concept of differing values, related to westernised and Confucian values and approaches to education emerged. This sparked my professional interest. After engaging with the concept of Confucian values, I found that these were also evident in the shift in work related demands (1.2 and 1.5), which in turn influence the concept of the importance of high academic achievement to support the child to accomplish those pressures and capabilities (Wong and Rao, 2015), (2.8.1.1). These pressures have impacted on the values of parents in Hong Kong (Berndt, et al., 1993; Lai, et al., 2000). This provided an interesting insight into possibilities for the careful choices that parents appeared to be making in Hong Kong. This professional interest in this topic of values and how they appeared to differ in Hong Kong from values in England led me to my research question:

How do values associated with academic achievement influence the choices Hong Kong parents make about early childhood provision?

The thesis reports a qualitative study which explored the values of a small number of parents in Hong Kong, specifically in terms of their choice of early childhood setting for their child. I also examined whether values held by those parents were reflected in values held by participating teachers in early years settings in Hong Kong.

# 3.1.2 Participants in the study.

The participants in the study were all residents of Hong Kong and were all parents of children aged 0-6 years, as this is the age children either attend the kindergarten, or parents are starting to choose a kindergarten for their children.

The first set of participants were early childhood teachers, who all worked in kindergartens in Hong Kong. These teachers were identified as they took part in a CPD session which discussed research approaches, delivered by me in Hong Kong. 66 out of 70 teachers agreed to take part in the study and completed a questionnaire, which was handed out as a hard copy during the CPD session.

The next set of participants were parents who were approached online on Hong Kong regional parenting social media sites. They were approached via this media during the pandemic, via Facebook and LinkedIn within Hong Kong. I used the regional areas within Hong Kong to engage with as many parents from different areas to gain a wider overview of values. The parent participants for these questionnaires, who were parents of children aged 0-6 years, were asked to complete a questionnaire online. 38 parents completed the online questionnaire.

From these 38 parents, 6 parents agreed to be interviewed. This was the last question on the anonymous questionnaire and parents who were interested in taking part added their email address which was later deleted. These interviews were undertaken and recorded via Zoom, Teams, or Google, depending on the choice of the parent at a time suitable for the parent.

Wider implications of power and bias in relation to the participants of this study are discussed in section 3.5 and 3.5.1.as some of the participants, especially the teachers may have felt that they had to take part in the study.

# 3.1.3. Chosen methods of gathering data.

The methods chosen for this study were interviews and questionnaires. Initially I had planned to undertake focus groups but due to the pandemic this had to be revised.

I chose interviews as I wanted to have a deeper awareness of parents’ lives and their values and beliefs. Using interviews meant I was able to ask more probing questions.

I also undertook questionnaires as this enabled me to get a wider audience. I initially asked teachers during a CPD session to take part. I subsequently posted my questionnaires on appropriate parenting social media sites to gain the parents views. The rationale for these methods is further discussed in the following sections.

# 3.2 Rationale for the qualitative methods.

I adopted a qualitative method approach, rather than a mixed method or a quantitative approach as I felt that I would gain more in-depth information by giving the participants an opportunity to elaborate on their answers, gaining wider knowledge which I may have missed if I had used narrow, prescribed questions in the interviews, as I did in the questionnaires. Whilst I understand that the strengths of quantitative methods can give the researcher a specific type of data set, collected from a wider range of participants (McCrudden, Marchand and Schutz, 2019), I felt that I needed deeper insight into participants values and thoughts. By adopting a qualitative approach, I was able to employ a wider flexibility to the research, which I felt was important for the context of the study. By using a more exploratory and subjective approach (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000), I felt I would be able to gain understanding of more personal and socially constructed values, even if these encountered social constraints, such as the political unrest and the pandemic at times.

By undertaking qualitative research, I felt I would be able to start to engage with ‘real world context’ of the people and participants involved in my study (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Ary, et al., (2019) highlight that the context and the setting of the research are very important, as the participants are from this background, as where the researcher may not share the context and cultural backgrounds of the participants, and this could impact on the interpretation of the data. Yin (2011) agrees with this and adds the importance of representing the participants’ views.

By using both questionnaires and interviews, which is further discussed in section 3.5, I was able to gain a deeper and richer data set, which explored individual experiences, values, and beliefs which I was then able to analyse and represent in relation to my research question (Plano, Clark and Ivankova, 2016), ‘Do values associated with academic achievement influence the choices Hong Kong parents’ make about early childhood provision?’

Another reason for this methodological approach was that by using qualitative questionnaires, I was able to approach different participant groups, parents, and teachers, with different views and approaches to early childhood settings/education. As I had to use online means to gain participants, I felt that due to the political and pandemic impact it was the most appropriate option to undertake questionnaires as this enabled participants to take part without it impacting too much on their time and environmental situation.

Undertaking questionnaires and subsequently interviews enabled me to potentially see if there were common denominators in the feedback and views of the participants. This allowed me to have an opportunity to evaluate if there was a degree of agreement regarding the importance of certain values between the two participant groups (Ghiara, 2020). By gaining this knowledge it would provide me with an understanding of which values were felt to be important to both teachers and parents.

As the two participant groups came from different perspectives, a teacher perspective and a parent perspective, I further wanted to discover if the findings of the research would give some clarification of what parents felt was important for their children and if this was in line with what teachers felt was important in children’s lives. This enabled comparison to see if the values were upheld in the various early years settings as parents were expecting. This was important because this would give some insight into the values being underpinned in kindergartens as well as if parents made specific choices regarding those values for their children.

Cresswell and Plano Clark (2018) reason that a research approach can be chosen by reflecting on the issue to be addressed, discovering absences in the current literature, and recognising knowledge needed to fill that gap. The literature review (Chapter 2) has considered various aspects of values and beliefs, thus bringing a clarity around the link between parental values and the early years setting in general. However, the literature also demonstrated minimal research undertaken with parental values and choices for their children in Hong Kong. Literature discussed political policy and the impact this had on kindergartens; however, this literature did not take into account parental voices on values, nor did it highlight teacher values (Park and Chesla, 2007). There was little existing information on this topic, and literature found was of a more incidental approach within wider research projects. I therefore felt that it was important to generate more understanding on this topic. I wanted to provide a broader context for understanding the values parents hold and to explore the impact of their values on choices they make for their children regarding choosing an early years setting, where those values may be present and shown by the teachers of that early years setting.

# 3.2.1 Qualitative methods.

My epistemological and ontological approaches as both an interpretivist and a constructivist (Clarke, et al., 2021) led to me adopting a qualitative approach for this study. Qualitative research gives me as a researcher an approach which allows examination of people’s experiences in more detail and gives the opportunity to identify aspects from the viewpoint of research participants and to gain wider understanding of the meanings and interpretations of their behaviours, views and values regarding choices they make for their children (Hennink et al ,2011).

A qualitative design was chosen as the qualitative method enables a more flexible approach as questions can be more open and fluctuate during interviews (Robson, 2011). As Merriam (1998:28) mentions, the decision to focus on a qualitative approach generally emerges from the fact that ‘the researchers are interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation’ and Shaw (1978:2) proposes that qualitative approaches in research ‘concentrate attention on the way a particular group of people confront specific problems.’

I believe that the qualitative approach enables me to have a depth and richness of data which I would not be able to gather if I had chosen a quantitative approach. This data has then enabled me to connect with the participants values, beliefs, and experiences by collecting and analysing, and at times during interviews, clarifying individuals’ experiences (Plano Clark and Ivankova, 2016). This is echoed by Denzin and Lincoln, (2000:646), who highlight that:

Qualitative researchers are realising that interviews are not neutral tools of data gathering but active interactions between two (or more) people leading to negotiated, contextually based results.

The qualitative method observes a more exploratory process, rather than being the result of a precise structure derived from an initial decision. I felt it was important to be able to be reflexive and to learn from the different stages of the knowledge the participants shared with me. The qualitative approach gave me the opportunity to interpret and gain wider knowledge as I went through the stages of the research data gathering. I used a more reflexive approach whereby I used the data gathered from the first questionnaires undertaken by teachers, to form the questions for the subsequent parent questionnaires and the interview questions for the parents.

Therefore, the method of collecting the first set of data from the teacher questionnaires, followed by analysing data and modifying and refocussing the research question, were all going on in a concurrent manner (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). It was important to me to be able to use understanding and knowledge gained from the findings of the first questionnaires, to be able to be reflexive and make changes to the next set of questionnaires. Subsequently the interview questions were designed after the two questionnaire sets had been analysed.

It is important to highlight that a qualitative approach can provide depth but if it was used in isolation, if only interviews were chosen, it would not portray the views of the wider participant population, who took part in this study, who could either agree or disagree with the findings and therefore show a narrow viewpoint on the topic. I felt that it was just as important to have a wider participant group who participated in the research. Using both interviews and questionnaires for different participant groups as this would either demonstrate an agreement of values held or a disagreement across the participating cohort.

From an ethical stance it was important for me to ensure that participants felt they could either answer a question or not, as it may have elicited memories or feelings from their past or even current life. So, as well as ensuring all data was anonymous the qualitative approach also needs to consider the feelings and previous experiences of the participants. If the possibility occurred where confidential material was shared then this needed to be taken out of the final findings to protect the participants, as this information would most probably not have benefitted the research (Hennink et al., 2011 and Hammersley and Traianou, 2012).

To gain wider understanding into the findings I used two theoretical approaches, which are discussed in the next section.

# 3.3 Theoretical approaches underpinning the thesis.

The methods used for this thesis are influenced by two main theoretical approaches: a socio-cultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1978) and bio-ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Velez-Agosto, et al., 2017). This section will consider these two underpinning theoretical approaches.

The socio-cultural perspective was chosen because this perspective encompasses the contribution of society to individual development (Cherry 2022). The socio-cultural approach argues that gaining new knowledge is principally a social process, and therefore our interactions with the people and environment around us, support our cognitive functions. Cherry (2022) further highlights that the sociocultural perspective, considers that emotional and spiritual development is driven, partly, by individuals who are in:

Mentor-type roles, such as teachers and parents. Other times, we develop our values and beliefs through our interactions within social groups or by participating in cultural events. (Cherry, 2022: np-online).

For me this is important as I have always felt that personal experiences and the people around us, who see us through these life experiences help us to develop our own values and beliefs. I felt that the socio-cultural perspective linked closely with the bio-ecological theory, presented by Velez-Agosto, et al., (2017), as both theories agree that children’s experiences and relationships they have with care givers and parents, impact on their development. The bio- ecological theory extends this notion when it highlights that children’s development is further impacted by additional layers within society such as the social, cultural, environmental, and economic circumstances. As both theories show the importance of social interaction and the wider social world around a child, I felt that these were important within this research as these notions influence values and beliefs. The two theories are interwoven within the thesis to create wider understanding of the values portrayed by parents and teachers in Hong Kong and to gain wider knowledge on how these values impact on choices parents make for their children regarding Early Childhood Education. Both theories will now be discussed further.

# 3.3.1 Socio-cultural theory.

The socio-cultural theory is centred on the idea that society and culture, shape our cognitive understanding and our learning processes**.** Social traditions, attitudes, values, and linguistic tendencies are all part of what shapes a person’s identity and reality (Wertsch, 2009). One of the main objectives of the socio-cultural theory of learning is the transmission of knowledge and cultural aspects between generations, (Kozulin et al., 2003). The way children learn and develop, by being taught through engagement with the world around them in a more informal manner, differs from culture to culture and is particular to each individual society as can be witnessed within the Hong Kong society.

Vygotsky argued that the development of higher order functions of the brain relied upon the interaction with other people such as parents, peers, as well as the culture people are living in. Vygotsky (1978), further believed that once this information was received, it then integrated with the individuals own understanding. Thus, according to the socio-cultural theory, the interactions children have would impact on the understanding of beliefs and values as they are passed on by the world around them. An important and well-known concept of Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory is the Zone of Proximal Development, he described this as: ‘What a child can do with assistance today, she will be able to do by herself tomorrow’ (Vygotsky, 1978: 87)

Vygotsky further defines the Zone of Proximal development as:

The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more able peers (Vygotsky, 1978: 86).

In reality this can mean that the influence of parents, care givers, and peers as well as the culture children are brought up in, can have an influence on their learning and knowledge as well as the values and beliefs they observe in others.

To understand others through a socio-cultural theory, the underlying assumptions from a research point of view need to be considered, as at the most basic level of the research there will be some core assumptions such as what the research is trying to describe or explain, therefore different theories can have different agendas and outcomes (Wertsch, 2009). By trying to gain some deeper insight into what parents and teachers believe and what their values are, I as the researcher have had to gain deeper understanding of my own values and beliefs, for example what are my own family beliefs and how do I think a choice in regard to education should be made for a child. By having a more informed view of what motivates parents and teachers, through a socio-cultural theory, I can gain wider understanding of their motivations and beliefs. Some of these motivations are discussed in literature as family values, social values, and academic values (2.3 and 2.7).

As discussed previously this research is not seeking generalised outcomes but to gain a wider understanding of the impact of values parents hold for their children and the choices they make for their children regarding the start of their educational journey.

The sociocultural theory highlights that social factors can influence development, and that this development can be different among cultures. By using this point of view, this theory can provide this research with a more informed viewpoint and awareness of the reasons which cause a person to have specific values that can be seen to influence choices. Another theory which supports this notion of what influences choices we make is the bio-ecological theory.

# 3.3.2 Bio-ecological theory.

 Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological theory is widely used throughout the world (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, Bronfenbrenner, 2005). The theory, which consists of five systems, considers the various aspects of life that impact on human development and gives some suggestions to how a child’s development is affected by their social relationships and the world around them. It is by no means a complete picture, though ecological theory is often associated with early childhood development (Trodd, 2016). Bronfenbrenner expanded his ideas from his original ecological theory, into the bio-ecological theory combining his original theory with new concepts, which reflect the complexity and dynamics of human development (Bronfenbrenner 2005, Bronfenbrenner, and Morris, 2006). Figure 3 below, shows the five systems as discussed by Bronfenbrenner (2005).

A diagram of different types of life cycle

Description automatically generated

Source: Simply Psychology, (2005).

Figure 3. Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological system graph.

The bio-ecological theory consists of the following aspects:

Micro-systems: This first layer of the system has according to Bronfenbrenner (2005), a direct influence on the child’s interactions, so they are the closest interactions a child or human being has. These interactions relate directly to how people treat the person and how this person treats others (for example, home life, parents, school or work as well as the genetic makeup of the child temperament, biological development, relationships with their main carer and relationships within the family).  In this part of the theory, I argue that the initial values are created, and beliefs passed on within the direct family before the child enters the educational journey. This is the first contact the child has with the wider world and therefore these are very important interactions in forming their views.

Meso-system: The interactions in the child’s immediate world such as the interaction between parents and a teacher, or siblings with each other. These interactions have a positive impact as the different microsystems around the child or person are working together (for example, family relationships, childcare, relationships within the community or health and welfare providers).  This part of the system according to Bronfenbrenner (2005), will strengthen the child’s values and beliefs they have encountered at home, as they will be either supported or challenged by other people around the child, giving at times different perspectives.

Exo-systems: This system does not involve the person directly or as an active participant, but the wider influences are impacting on their lives. These could be structural and environmental aspects which impact on the child’s health (for example, government policies on housing, education, food supplies, vaccination, employment for their parents) (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Macro-system: The wider cultural influences on the child and family and the area where the person lives has an impact on their wider systems (for example nationality, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status and how these change with time and transitions). This is the point I disagree (as explained further in this section below) with Bronfenbrenner as I believe strongly that cultural influences run through all aspects of a child’s life but more directly in the Micro and Meso systems as argued by Velez-Agosto, et al., (2017).

Chrono-system: The impact of life course events and transitions in the socio- historical timeframe, or this can be the timing an event takes place. This system can also refer to the importance of timing when an event occurs or even be a generational occurrence which has a lasting impact (for example, the changes in health, family constructions, childhood, or in the timeframe of this research; a pandemic, or political unrest which leaves a lasting imprint) and the impact these changes over time have on human experiences.  (Trodd ,2016, Gray and MacBain 2015, Roberts, 2010).

Features of the importance of the five systems as in figure 3.1, have been challenged by some main theoretic views such as Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), Rogoff’s transformation of participation perspective (Rogoff, 2003) and Weisner’s eco-cultural theory (Weisner, 2009). These theorists propose that ‘culture is not separate from the individual; but a product of human activity’ (Markus and Kitayama, 2009: p 423). Because culture cannot, in my opinion, be seen as a separate feature, I have engaged with the reconceptualised theory of Velez-Agosto, et al. (2017), who propose a revision of Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological theory, whereby the aspect of culture is moved from the Macro system into the Micro system. I agree with Velez-Agosto, et al. (2017), who believe that culture is not a separate system which functions from a Macro level but is in fact incorporated within the daily activities of human beings and therefore should be positioned within the Micro system level, as well as becoming a thread throughout the varying systems. I agree with this notion as throughout this study it has become apparent to me that cultural aspects impact on daily lives of people and influence the decisions they make regarding their children and their family lives; therefore, these cultural beliefs are deep-seated within personal values and beliefs. Velez-Agosto, et al., (2017), further highlight that culture can be observed within everyday practices such as communication, cognitive processes, and memory, hence why they believe that culture should take a more prominent place within the study of development. Bronfenbrenner (2005) does not highlight culture as a main aspect within his bio-ecological model and this model is questioned by Rogoff (2003:44) who ‘raises questions about treating individual and cultural processes as separate entities’. I believe that values and beliefs are intertwined throughout all aspects, including culture, of a person’s life and cannot be separated from the main influences in that person’s life, because they form part of their character, values and beliefs.

Within this research it has become apparent to me that values of kindness, sharing, love, respect and politeness are important to the participants. These values are rooted within their cultural upbringing and can be linked back to the Confucian values which reside in Hong Kong (Wong and Rao, 2015). I therefore felt it was important to move the cultural aspect closer to the core, into the micro system of the bio ecological systems as this supports my own beliefs and understanding of how children and their parents share values.

# 3.4 Ethical issues and informed consent.

Before commencing with this research study, I engaged with literature which drew attention to areas to consider when engaging in a successful study (Yin, 2014). As the researcher of this study, it is my responsibility to safeguard that the course of action undertaken in the study is well designed, because of possible time and emotional involvement of the participants who take part in the study (Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier, 2013). It was therefore imperative that I engaged with the participants and was clear and open about the research methods, procedures, and the boundaries as well as any power imbalances and therefore conformed to the BERA standards (British Educational Research Association, 2018). May (2011:47) states that ‘ethics are fundamental in maintaining the integrity and legitimacy of research in society and in protecting practitioners and participants. It was therefore important that I gained ethical consent, which was sought, gained, and adhered to from the University of Sheffield (Appendix 1). To ensure my integrity within the study I needed to ensure all participants understood the study and the reasons why I was undertaking the study. I also informed all participants of what would happen to the data gathered, and the options for the participants to see the completed thesis if they wished to do so, to ensure I used their data in an honest manner. To gain fully informed consent from the participants in this study, an information sheet which discusses the full explanation of the research purpose and participant involvement was designed (Appendix 2), two different consent sheets were created, to specify for the different target groups (parents, Appendix 3 and teachers, Appendix 4) what the involvement in the study would be.

The documents highlighted the aspects of gaining consent and ensuring that participants could rely upon the fact that the study adheres to full confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy of the participants (Curtis, Murphy, and Shields, 2014). The information sheet further discussed the option of participants to retract their involvement in the study at any time during the study, and that there was the right of refusal to take part in the study. Further consent forms were designed which linked with the different methods used for the study (Interview consent form, Appendix 5, Teacher questionnaires consent form, Appendix 6, Parent questionnaire consent form, Appendix 7) and these were shared with and agreed by the participants of all three groups consisting of teachers, parent questionnaires and parent interviews, before commencing data gathering. The importance of gaining informed ethical consent is to ensure that the research participants are respected throughout the research project, as well as for the researcher to adhere to general morality, which affects attitudes, beliefs, and relationships (Plowright, 2011). To gain ethical consent is also a legal requirement for all universities. This aspect of respect is echoed by BERA (2019) as the guidelines state:

All educational research should be conducted within an ethic of respect for: the person; knowledge; democratic values; the quality of educational research; and academic freedom. Trust is a further essential element within the relationship between researcher and researched, as is the expectation that researchers will accept responsibility for their actions.                                                                                                              BERA (2019; NP).

During the undertaking of this research project, it was important to be aware of power relations within the data gathering, and participant perception of what they are allowed to do, such as to decide not to participate, and what the research is used for. I will discuss more fully the process of administering the teacher questionnaires later, (3.5.1) but at this point it is important to acknowledge the place of ‘power’ in questionnaire and interview administration.

A risk benefit analysis (BERA, 2019) was undertaken whereby I spoke to colleagues in Hong Kong to ensure that culturally I was gaining ethical consent correctly, as it needs to be considered, that culturally participants may or may not feel able to express their opinions freely (Brooks, et al., 2014). Hong Kong does have the freedom of speech as set out by article 27 of the Basic Law and the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance (1991), however by mid-2020 the Beijing government imposed a National Security Law (NSL) (July, 2020), which meant that inhabitants of Hong Kong were no longer free to offer their opinions on various matters and especially in relation to the political situation. This had the potential for participants to not voice their opinions freely during the completion of the questionnaire and/or the interview. I had to make sure that I would not put participants in a compromising situation, by ensuring questions did not relate in any way to the political situation in Hong Kong.

As an outsider researcher (Sikes and Potts, 2008) to the study, whereby I had access to teachers in CPD session I led, and as an outsider as I did not know the parents who took part in the study, it was vital that I maintained a ‘duty of care’ (British Educational Research Association, 2018:13) to all participants. It was important that I was sensitive to their views and opinions especially as my research took place during a period of enormous changes to the people of Hong Kong namely the political unrest followed by Covid-19.

The flexible nature of using a qualitative study can cause ethical dilemmas as it may be difficult, if not at times impossible, to inform the participants of the outcomes of the study. In this research, findings from interviews were shared with participants, if participants indicated that they wished to be informed, as email contacts had been shared. For other participants who took part in questionnaires, the contact specifics were unknown to me. Therefore, asking for ethical consent was a difficult matter, as I cannot fully give assurances of where the research findings and data may lead (Brooks, et al., 2014). It is however the case that participants are informed of how the data will be disseminated and what it will be used for and for this informed consent is obtained.

It has been mooted by various qualitative researchers that informed consent is not a workable process and this should be replaced by an ‘ethics of care’ which places the ‘emphasis on care and responsibility for respondents within the context of specific research relationships, however the research eventually unfolds’ (Edwards and Mauthner, 2012: 89). I feel that it is important to have informed consent as well as being mindful of how the research unfolds. By gaining informed consent I feel that as a researcher you have covered all aspects, and no unexpected dissemination of your findings will take place. Noddings (2013) also discusses care for the research participants and examines the regards the researcher needs to have and feel for the participants and the circumstances in which the research takes place. Noddings (2013) further shares that she feels that there does not need to be a long lasting established personal relationship with the participant in a research project, but when addressing the participant, one needs to be non-selectively fully present with this participant. By giving the participant their full attention, a researcher can share their time in a caring, responsible, and thus ethical manner.

Elliott (2005) highlights that as well as the importance of ethical issues, whereby the relationship between the researcher, the research subject and the participants, the researcher also needs to be aware of political issues. Elliott (2005) describes the political issues as having the possibility of having much broader implications on society or specific groups within society. A political aspect (1.3) was present during my data gathering, as there were protests and unrest in Hong Kong due to the plans to legislate for the extradition of people who had been charged with criminal offences in Hong Kong, to mainland China for sentencing and punishment (Cheung and Hughes, 2020). It is therefore important to understand that my position as the researcher is not to judge the parental or teacher choices which are made for their children, but to understand their choices as part of the political and cultural context of Hong Kong.

# 3.4.1 Building relationships, power imbalance and participants.

When undertaking research, it is important to recognise that there can be power dynamics between the researcher and the participants. Smythe and Murray (2005) observed this power dynamic, they highlight that the participants in the study are irrefutably the more knowledgeable of their own experiences, however, researchers often have ‘theoretical knowledge and access to literature that can frame the participant’s experience within a much larger context’ (p,182). In this context of undertaking research in Hong Kong it was important to build relationships with the participants within new socially constructed realities, which meant that I needed to ensure that the participants, who came from different backgrounds and different roles (parent or teacher) were valued and were able to share their own opinions and voice. Hall and Wall (2019:154) suggest this ‘means that the diversity of the population can start to be captured.’

I was delivering CPD to the teachers when I approached them and asked if they were willing to take part in my study which asked questions about their teaching values in Hong Kong. I was very aware that there was a clear power relationship during the handing out of the questionnaires to the teachers (3.5).

The respect and reverence of being taught by a lecturer from a UK University is very clear, as all students address me as ‘Professor’, and are very respectful. It is therefore completely possible that the teacher participants may have felt they had to complete the questionnaire, rather than thinking they had an option of choosing to do so (Mukherji and Albon, 2011). To avoid this power imbalance, I discussed this with the participants beforehand and made it clear that in any research project you have a choice if you want to take part or not and told them that taking part in my research was completely voluntary. Out of the 70 teachers present, 66 teachers chose to take part in the research questionnaire. That some chose not to participate was an indication to me that my explanation that the process of taking part was voluntary had been made clear. The participants who chose to take part gave voluntary informed consent and used the ‘opt in’ procedure whereby they signed the consent forms (Punch and Oancea, 2014). When they returned the completed forms, I checked again that they were happy for me to use the data, giving them the option to opt out if they wished to do so at that stage (Curtis, Murphy and Shields, 2014, Punch and Oancea, 2014).

The second part of the research was conducted by online questionnaires and subsequently remote online interviews, this was due to restrictions placed upon travel because of the Covid-19 pandemic (1.4). The research was conducted using social media (Facebook and LinkedIn) for questionnaires for parents. Initially 26 parents completed the questionnaire and at a later date, when the same questionnaire was posted on further sites, another 12 parents completed the questionnaire, therefore 38 parents in total completed the online survey. From this group initially 7 parents were happy to be interviewed. One parent decided that they did not want to be interviewed but did respond by writing their answers in an email.

During the next stage of data gathering, online systems were used for interviews with parents in Hong Kong. These interviews were undertaken using video conferencing through Zoom, Google hangout or Teams, depending on the choice made by the participants, (3.7.4).

This brought some issues, as identifying and recruiting participants in this manner was a challenge. An ethical challenge was gaining written consent which in the initial stages meant that I was unable to explain the research orally face to face, and participants would have already made up their mind from the information sheet they received. This could have led to fewer people being willing to take part in the study. I also had to build a relationship with the participants and due to undertaking the interviews online it was difficult to judge when I could establish a sense of privacy, as I had no background information to ascertain if the participant was in a shared room or had limited private space to speak freely, openly and honestly. Although from my end privacy was never compromised, as I was in a room on my own during the interviews and I asked participants at the start of each interview if they felt they were free to talk (Peterman, et al., 2020). After each interview I asked if participants wanted a copy of the recording to check if there were aspects they wanted to take out of the content. Only two participants wanted a copy of the recording.  None of the participants asked for any content to be deleted.

# 3.4.2 Voice of participants.

The manner in which parents parent, greatly impacts on a child’s early life experiences and the direction of their intellectual, emotional, behavioural and social development throughout the lifespan (Britto et al. [2015](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10567-019-00307-y#ref-CR18); Leadsom et al. [2014](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10567-019-00307-y#ref-CR59)). To enable me as the researcher to understand their values and points of view as a parent and the impact this can have on their children, it is important that I hear their voices and listen to their meaning. In this case I would like to define ‘voice’ in a broad and inclusive sense to enable me to encompass different opinions and gain understanding of their values as well as the impact the culture around them has on these values and choices. Voice is not always the spoken word but can also be the actions the parents have taken, for example by choosing a specific kindergarten for their child (Martin and Vincent, 1999). The voices of parents are important in shaping children’s values for various reasons. For example, Kewalramani et al, (2020:45) discuss that: ‘Parents’ beliefs, values and associated everyday practices can play an influential role in their children’s educational environment.’ It is therefore important that we listen and hear their voices and opinions regarding their child’s educational journey and the values the parents want to be instilled in their children. Another reason, when drawing on Vygotsky’s (1978) socio-cultural theory, is that the parent is considered the more ‘knowledgeable other’ in the child’s life. Parents further influence the child’s engagement in their educational journey; therefore, it is important to take into consideration their views and voice on their familial cultural beliefs and values, which shape the child’s everyday life (Archer, et al., 2010; Sikder and Fleer, 2015).

As this research listens to the voices of teachers as well as parents, it is important to understand that teachers voices often have a greater impact within educational settings, as these are often seen as professional views, rather than the personal views parents voice (Tveit, 2009), and therefore the parental authentic voice may be missing and there is a power dimension which cannot be dismissed (Koselleck, 1990). Lawson (2003) discusses that teachers and parents often showed conflicting beliefs and as discussed teachers may have a power dimension to support their beliefs, parents may lack the educational background or the foundations to make their voices heard. There is also the notion that educational settings in general often are bureaucratic institutions who must adhere to policies set by the government, this in turn means that teachers have to follow the bureaucratic mandatory standards of the educational setting, and this does not enable them to have their own opinions and views heard (Llisko, et al., 2010). Kincheloe, (2003) further highlights that teachers voices are seen as the teacher’s capability to explain their educational philosophy as well as to adhere to and voice the mandatory standards set by the government. This does not enable teachers to voice their personal opinions or values within their educational setting.

This research and the data gathered, aims to enable different voices to be heard which represent their cultural identities and thus allowing an exchange of views expressed by different voices, in this case parents and teachers who share the same country but have very different backgrounds and cultural upbringing (Martin and Vincent, 1999). Hearing and listening to the voices of parents is important, as parents shape children’s values as well as their moral compass, their emotional development and cultural identity. The choices parents make by sharing their voices can have a direct impact on children’s journeys, as children could attend a kindergarten which paves the way for the rest of their educational journey (2.6).

# 3.5 The pilot study and lessons learnt.

Before commencing the research for this study, I undertook a pilot study. Ruel, et al., (2016) discuss the importance of piloting a survey, to identify any issues that may arise such as the understanding of the questions, or other problem areas.

The process of undertaking the pilot study supported my understanding of the needs of the participants in regards language and clarity of the questions (Stake, 1995). I was able to be reflexive and make changes to how I conducted questionnaires and interviews at a later stage. This helped me to ensure that that the research tools were effective (Bryman, 2008), ensuring I considered any ‘biases’ and ‘being judgmental’ (Cohen, et al., 2007:361), and understanding the timeframe needed to administer the questionnaires, undertake the interviews and be more realistic about my timeframe.

# 3.5.1 Parent questionnaire pilot study.

I undertook a pilot study with a small cohort of parents in an early year setting in Hong Kong. This pilot study took part five months before undertaking the main research data gathering. A total of 10 parent participants were happy to complete the pilot questionnaire. The questionnaires were handed out as hard copies to parents visiting their child’s early years setting. This mode of handing out hard copies of the questionnaires was chosen, as I was not aware if the parents had access to online /internet facilities and this was the quickest way to engage the parents. The participants completed the questionnaire immediately upon receiving it, whilst still in the setting, as they had been requested to do so by the staff of the setting, this was not by my instruction, but the staff seemed to want to be helpful and there may have been an issue of wanting to be seen as being capable within their job as their line manager was on the premises at the time. The completed questionnaires were returned on the day of handing them out. This meant that parents did not have much time to really think about their answers and the process could be seen as being rushed.

# 3.5.2 Challenges and changes arising from the pilot study.

The pilot study identified some challenges. As some of the parents answered the questions in Cantonese, I asked a member of staff in the early years setting where I ran the pilot, to translate answers in Cantonese to English. However, I realised that due to this research being unfunded and further shaped by the constraints of the time, I had to approach participants who felt able to answer in their sometimes second language of English for the subsequent research questionnaires (Dahlia, et al., 2014). Another issue the pilot study brought to light was that the language I used appeared unfamiliar to some participants, so some wording needed to be revised or further explained as this could impact on the data quality at a later stage (Ruel, et al., 2016). For example, terms such as ‘early years setting’ was language the participants were not accustomed to, so this was changed to ‘kindergarten.’ Cormier (2017) discusses conducting research where more than one language is spoken by either the researcher or the participants or both in this case, that;

Translation and interpretation should be reflected upon before the onset of data collection. This is because translation and interpretation are also forming linguistic power that can have a direct impact on the validity of the data collected. (p, 329).

There could have been some impact on data as the participants may not have been fluent in English which often would be their second language. For the subsequent questionnaires with teachers and parents, I asked participants not to answer in any other language than English. I explained that I was not able to read or speak Cantonese or Mandarin, and I did not want to miss any of their important answers on the questionnaires. The English language was not an issue for the teacher participants, as it had been for the pilot study parent participants, as all teacher participants spoke and wrote in English as they were undertaking a CPD session in the English language, and no completed questionnaire had to be removed from the study due to languages used.

For the parent questionnaires, the need for answering in the English language was also highlighted in the online description of the reason for the research. This need for using English may have excluded some parents whose English language skills were not sufficient to complete the questionnaire. However, due to financial aspects and lack of funding, of getting the different languages translated, this was a necessary component of the research. The pilot also showed that some participants did not fully understand the questions and after discussion with a member of staff at the early year setting where the pilot was undertaken, I changed some of the wording and some of the questions to ensure the participants understood what I was asking them (Lavrakas, 2008).

# 3.6 Research process.

As I started to plan my research, I thought about and reflected upon the processes which I needed to undertake and started to form the research questions as outlined in the first chapter. My main research question is as follows:

**Do values associated with academic achievement influence the choices Hong Kong parents’ make about early childhood provision?**

To gain wider understanding into this complex issue, I further posed the following questions to support my journey within this research.

* What are parental values in general, and specifically in Hong Kong?
* Which aspects (historical, economic, political, and global) may impact on these values?
* What cultural values, do teachers in early years settings hold in Hong Kong? Are parents’ and teachers' cultural values similar, or is there a chasm or disconnect between them?
* Are Hong Kong ‘cultural’ values (as described in the literature) identifiable in practitioner and parent perspectives on important aspects of education in early childhood settings?

To start to gain some understanding of the process of this study, I have included a timeline, which is set out in table 1 below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Research phase | Date | Topic |
| 1 | September 2018 | Ethical consent sought from the University of Sheffield Research Ethics committee and ethical approval gained (appendix 1,3,4,5). |
| 2 | May 2019 | Pilot study was undertaken in one nursery in Hong Kong where I piloted the study questionnaire with parents. |
| 3 | June 2019 | Research discussed with staff and Program Director, at the University in Hong Kong contacted, which led to leads for finding participants. |
| 4 | June 2019 | Questionnaires questions were amended after the pilot study and new questions developed for both parents and teachers. |
| 5 | October 2019 | Teachers undertaking CPD were invited to participate in the study at the end of their CPD session, The research study was explained verbally and in written form. Hard copies of the questionnaire (appendix 7) and information sheets (appendix 2b) as well as consent sheets (appendix 4) were handed out. |
| 6 | October 2019 | Political protests and demonstrations were making it unsafe for me to stay in the country and these protests restricted travel afterwards from England to Hong Kong. |
| 7 | January 2020- travel from UK to Hong Kong restricted | Covid travel restrictions then meant I had to revise my approach to undertaking the next stage of the research as I could not gather the data in person in Hong Kong itself and had to revert to use an online approach. |
| 8 | 1st of November 2020 – 1st of February 2021(closed survey) | Parent participants were approached via social media sites. A variety of parenting groups were used on Facebook as well as LinkedIn. Parents were asked to complete a questionnaire (appendix 8). |
| 9 | February 2021 | Parent questionnaire administered. |
| 10 | Feb- March 2021 | The questionnaire data analysed. Themes found were used to formulate interview questions (appendix 6). |
| 11 | March 2021 | Interviews held via; Google meet, Teams and Zoom, depending on parental preference and recorded with parent permission. |
| 12 | April-May 2021 | Interview data analysed and themes highlighted. |
| 13 | July 2021-Jan 2022 | Taken 6-month LOA due to health issues. |
| 14 | March- May 2023 | Themes from both interviews and questionnaires data analysed. |
| 15 | June-December 2023 | Writing up time. |

Table 1. Overview of study dates and data collection.

The table shows the timeline for this study and the overview of different challenges which impacted on the timeline. Throughout this study I approached both parents and teachers in Hong Kong. Parents were the main participants within this study, but I felt it was important to also have a more balanced view whereby teachers could also share their values.

I started to ask teachers through the aid of questionnaires, what their values are and if they believed these values were part of their culture. I felt that I was drawing on the concept of teachers as ‘lost souls’ (Ball, 2003) who could have the impression that they are not heard and thereby giving the teachers a voice within an appropriate platform of using questionnaires. This way teachers were able to answer freely as the data would be anonymous but would give me a rich understanding into my research questions.

At a later date I also sent questionnaires to parents, to enable me to ‘hear’ their voices and to start to gain some understanding of their values and beliefs. This allowed me to gain wider knowledge and understanding of parental values and how these started to link in with teacher values.

The interviews with parents which followed these two sets of questionnaire within this research, gave me an opportunity to discuss explicit values and gain some insight into implicit values. These implicit values were often unconsciously expressed during the interviews (Aadland, 2010).

By using the three sets of data I was aiming to establish if the values which were brought to the forefront by the participants, had an important role to play in the choices made by parents for their children, as parental values and the teacher values would give meaning and purpose for those choices made by the parents regarding kindergarten choices (Kraatz et al., 2020).

This section has highlighted the importance of engaging participants with the study. The posing of the sub-questions helped guide the study and supported the main research question. Table 1. gives a timeline when the data gathering took place and sets the scene for the research methods section.

# 3.7 Research methods.

All data collected for this research were collected using questionnaires and interviews with parents, as well as questionnaires with kindergarten teachers. For parent participants, the criterion was that they had to have a child or children in the age group of two to six years old, as that is the age group when children in Hong Kong attend a kindergarten (Education Bureau, 2019) and the criterion for teachers was that they had to have worked with children in this age group.

I used teacher questionnaires with teachers, who teach in kindergartens, to establish their values and beliefs to ascertain if these were comparable to the views and values of the parents. I also used parent questionnaires as well as parent interviews. I felt it was important to get a sense of shared value and if this was what attracted parents to a specific kindergarten or if there were other aspects such as for example, culture or economics which impacted their choices.

During the undertaking of the initial data gathering, the political situation in Hong Kong became very strained and protests and violence erupted over an extended period of time and freedoms became constraint. The data from kindergarten teachers were collected during week twenty-one of the 2019 protests and political restraint, this aspect may have had an influence on the data gathered in the questionnaires. It is important to highlight this, as kindergarten teachers who took part, also mentioned anecdotally in separate conversations, strong feelings about aspects of freedom and lack of respect in their home city of Hong Kong. These feelings of needing freedom and respect may have been heightened by the protests.

Questionnaires and interviews to elicit parents’ views took place after teacher data were collected, during November 2020 and February 2021, during the Corona virus pandemic, when schools and kindergartens in Hong Kong were closed for considerable periods of time and parents had to home school their children. These changes in their lives will have made an impact on their values and beliefs of the world they found themselves living in.

# 3.7.1 Questionnaires and participants.

One of the data collection instruments used in this study were questionnaires, these are a widely used method of data gathering (Johnson and Christensen, 2008, Hartas, 2010). Questionnaires were chosen to gain wider information from teachers and parents in Hong Kong, during a time where it was not possible to undertake focus groups due to environmental limitations. Questionnaires have been used in quantitative and qualitative research (Punch, 2014), although a drawback can be that questionnaire data lack depth in the answers and further information may need to be gained to expand on the data (Robert-Holmes, 2011).

Johnson and Christensen (2008) and Hartas (2010), discuss that questionnaires are typically used to collect data on various aspects, such as demographics, knowledge on a particular subject, attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and values as well as experiences and behaviours. In the case of this research, it was the participants’ knowledge on a particular subject such as the values they hold in their family (for the parent participants) and the values and beliefs as held by educational practitioners/ teachers which was sought through the means of the questionnaires.

A limitation could be the types of questions asked, as these can be restrictive (Mukherji and Albon, 2011). For the purpose of this thesis, open questions were used to give more scope for individual answers which linked with the topic of values. Mukherji and Albon, (2011) considered that questionnaires are often aligned with less interpretive methods because when we design a questionnaire it is often reflecting the researchers’ own views and interests rather than those of the participants.

I kept in mind personal and cultural barriers, which would not be uncommon in an international setting, where not all participants may feel comfortable in expressing their values, beliefs, and opinions in front of their colleagues and therefore felt that handing out a questionnaire was a better option than for example a focus group, for my teacher participants. I further choose not to use multiple choice questioning as an approach, as the answers could be restricted to my own values as a parent or teacher and researcher, rather than values held by the teachers and parents. Because if I had included a list of options within a multiple-choice questionnaire then I may still have omitted the real values participants felt were important. The same reason was used to eliminate rank order questions (Hartas, 2010) as again these could have led teachers and parents into deciding on the importance of set values rather than giving the opportunity for teachers to share their personal and educational values and give voice to their own opinions on values and beliefs.

I began with teacher questionnaires to gain a wide breadth of data and reach a larger audience in a short time. The first part of the data gathering involved the teacher questionnaires which were distributed to 70 teachers (66 returned) in paper form, with the information sheet (Appendix 2) and consent paperwork (Appendix 6).

The second part of data gathering was the distribution of parent questionnaires via social media sites to parents, 38 parents participated, followed by parental interviews which eventually were undertaken with six parents.

# 3.7.2. Teacher questionnaires.

The first set of questionnaires was distributed to a group of 70 teachers who all had been working in a variety of early childhood settings for more than one year. This variety of representation of early years settings ensured a broader representation of teachers in the early childhood sector in Hong Kong. I decided to gather this information from the 70 teachers in attendance of the CPD sessions, as due to the political restraints it became apparent that I would not be able to contact a wider audience at a later date as previously planned. This will have had some impact on the data as these were all teachers who were committed to further CPD and learning, and they may have had a different mindset than other teachers who did not attend those sessions.

Questions asked were:

* As a teacher, which values do you think your kindergarten or school should teach the children (write as many as you can think of)?
* Are the values you have highlighted in the first question, Confucian values?
* Are the values you have highlighted in the first question western values?
* Do you think they are a combination of both Confucian and western values?
* What values do you think parents want you to teach to their children?

The questions were open-ended to give the teachers room to share their own views and their views on the values they believed the early childhood setting they worked at portrayed, and these can be seen in the analysis and results chapter of this thesis (Chapter 4).

# 3.7.3. Parent questionnaires.

Parents were approached via social media sites to invite them to participate in my research in the form of a questionnaire. I distributed a short questionnaire via Survey Monkey on Facebook groups sites for parents in the various areas in Hong Kong. I also used my own personal networks in Hong Kong via LinkedIn. The areas were chosen by first investigating parent groups availability on Facebook, and then by the various districts within Hong Kong. This was to ensure there was a wide representativeness within the samples and not one specific area was chosen as this would impact on the data gathered. Some areas may be mainly represented by people from a particular background, culture or international or demographic area.  The method of enabling a large cohort of the community to be included, eliminates the selectivity of specific backgrounds, thereby ensuring a wide representation of parent participants (Valado and Amster, 2012).  However, the drawback of this method meant that it excluded participants who did not have easy access to social media or online technology, and the parents who were not a member of the parenting groups. Due to travelling Covid constraints, it was not possible to find a solution that would include a wider cohort of parents.

I decided to undertake the initial questionnaires with the parents via Survey Monkey, a free online survey development cloud-based software which has customizable surveys. As the respondents stayed anonymous, it meant that I was able to protect their digital data from unauthorised users of the internet. I found that this is a user-friendly tool which enabled me to design surveys, which could then be sent out anywhere in the world, giving the advantage of reaching a large cohort of possible participants within a short period of time (Sue and Ritter, 2016).

Another advantage of using a web-based survey tool is that the exercise can be repeated easily if more data needs to be collected using the same questions and the same link for participants to access the questionnaire (Gill, et al. 2013). The data is also gathered much quicker as the speed at which participants complete the questionnaire also means that this data is immediately available to me on the other side of the world, rather than having to collect paper questionnaires and to analyse each individual questionnaire. An online platform offers speed, efficiency, lower costs as the researcher has no travel or postal costs and neither do the participants, as well as being able to engage a wider participant network (Dillman, Smyth and Christian, 2008).

The questionnaire explained the purpose of the survey and asked parents to take part on a voluntary basis. At the end of the survey there was an option for the participants to share their email address if they were interested in taking part in a follow up interview.

# 3.7.4. Interviews undertaken with parents.

One of the reasons I chose to undertake interviews with parent participants was because my epistemological notion is that knowledge is established via participants’ personal knowledge, interactions, and exchanges with others. Interviews were chosen as a method of gathering data as:

It is a good way of accessing people’s perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and constructions of reality. It is also one of the most powerful ways we have of understanding others. (Punch, 2014:144).

Interviews are a method of undertaking a conversation (Holstein and Gubrium, 2003), as well as ‘multi-sensory channels to be used: verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard’ (Cohen, et al., 2011:349) and the interactional character of these conversations encounter a continuous dynamic of power and positionality which need to be negotiated carefully throughout the interview method (Nowicka and Ryan, 2015).

The use of semi structured interviews enables participants to discuss their own opinions and experiences without being led into a yes-no answer but into a conversational open experience (Opie, 2008). I believed this to be important for my research and to gain more honest answers from my participants. By undertaking interviews via online face to face accounts whereby the participants could see me, I was able to further explain my questions if needed, as well as being able to ask the participants for further explanations when a new topic was highlighted. A semi-structured interview enabled me to be:

Flexible in terms of the order in which the topics are considered ... to let the interviewee develop ideas and speak more widely (Denscombe, 2010:175).

Semi-structured, 20-to-30-minute online interviews, were chosen as one of my tools.

I chose to use interviews because I felt that speaking to parents directly gave more scope to engage with participants’ inner reflections and gain a deeper insight into their thoughts and values.  Interviews enable wider discussion on parental perceptions and beliefs of content discussed. Speaking online, (in a face-to-face capacity) to the parents, helped me gain their trust by demonstrating empathy and sharing my own experiences, thus building a brief and tentative relationship for the duration of each interview (Salmons, 2014).

The six participants who showed an interest in taking part in the interview after the initial questionnaires, were sent a follow up email explaining the purpose of the interview and an information sheet (Appendix 2) as well as the consent forms (Appendix 5), which were attached for parents to read and familiarise themselves. They were then asked if they were still happy to contribute to the research. One participant decided they did not wish to proceed with a face-to-face interview but did write the answers down instead. The participant gave as a reason that she did not have time for an online interview but was happy to write down some information. It was important to contact participants before the interviews as this increased the likelihood that they cooperated with the research as they will have understood the research in more detail as well as having built the start of a relationship with myself as the interviewer (Lavrakas, 2008). It was further important that participants could inform me of their availability. Parent participants were asked to give possible times and dates when they could meet and discussed via email what the best online option was for them to undertake the interview, (Lavrakas, 2008).

Options available were to undertake the interviews via Microsoft Teams, Google hangout or Zoom. All interviews were recorded with the permission from the parent and a copy of the recording shared with the participant after the interview. A follow up email was consequently sent to check the participants were happy for the recording to be used as well as to thank them for their time. This ensured that participants were still content to be part of the research, but it also ensured that any communication issues or boundaries were addressed.

By trying to research participants’ views and their social and cultural world (3.4.1), it is not always necessary to adopt a neutral and disinterested observer position (Thomas, 2013). In contrast conducting interviews was less rigid for me as the interviewer, enabling me to be open and to respond to information as it was told, to enable me to become an interpreter of events and content. Therefore, a mixture of open, structured, and less structured questions was chosen for this research (Thomas, 2013).

Interview questions were designed after participants had taken part in the short questionnaire and the questions were initially quite closed, for example questions such as:

* How old is your child?
* Does your child attend a kindergarten?
* Did your child have to take part in an assessment to gain entry to the kindergarten?

These questions had already been asked in the questionnaire, but I felt it was a good start to gain some trust and to refer to the previously completed questionnaire to start the interview in an easy manner.  After those questions were asked, the interview then took the form of a more welcoming chat. There was a script with questions (Appendix 8) and these questions were woven into the conversation, rather than asked in order, as it was felt that this was more friendly as well as eliciting wider conversation and more information from the parents in a responsive manner (King, Horrocks and Brooks, 2019). The questions were used in an open and semi-structured manner, but the fundamental nature of the topic was adhered to throughout the various interviews (Galletta, 2016). Therefore, the interviews became partially respondent led by the parents (Gubrium, 2012). If a more structured approach had been used then I felt that parents would have possibly given more rational and factual responses rather than speaking more freely and maybe give more emotional responses to their values (Fontana and Frey, 1994, Punch, 2014).

This section has discussed the questionnaires, interviews, and the participants.

# 3.8 Generalisability.

During the research, some commonalities appeared but rather than viewing these as a dangerous entity, these had to be viewed as informative and enabled me to engage with any wider implications beyond the study’s immediate participants (Atkinson: 2017).

The commonalities within the study needed to be viewed within the context of the study and as a representation of the specific attributes of the participants of the study, as well as the cultural and the historical time frame in which the study was undertaken. This study was not seeking the generalise findings but due to the lack of literature around the values of parents, it was felt by the researcher that the topic of parental values was important and at times misunderstood or not taken into account by kindergartens and the government policies, it was therefore deemed that these were topics which were worthy of study (Punch, 2014). In this case generalisation was not the objective of the study (Denzin, 2001). Findings of the research may be culturally specific, and time bound to a degree (Bryman, 2016). This study cannot be generalised as these are participants’ personal views, and a study on a much wider qualitative scale would need to be undertaken to be able to generalise findings (Streiner and Norman, 1995). As I wanted to have personal stories of parents, using quantitative data was not a study design I preferred. A sense of what influenced and moved the participants to make certain decisions for their children was perceived and this can support wider understanding of what is seen to be important (values and beliefs) to be available in kindergartens.

# 3.9 Issues of Bias.

It is important to consider bias, which can occur due to cultural aspects of this study, as the differing cultures between myself as a Dutch national living in the UK, and the cultural viewpoints of participants who live in Hong Kong. Seeing as this is an interpretive study it is challenging not to include my own bias. It therefore has to be accepted that my own experiences, preconceptions and knowledge do impact on the way this study is interpreted, however it is also important to acknowledge that these biases do not have to have a negative impact but could be seen as a positive manner in which the findings are interpreted (Hirsch et al., 2016). By Carrying out a qualitative study and by being an integral part of the process and final product it is not possible to separate my personal views and therefore at times bias from the study. The question I had to ask myself in doing this qualitative study was how to deal with this bias. To ensure my bias did not affect the study, I had to be critical and self-reflective about my own preconceptions and be transparent about my personal beliefs (as discussed in sections 1.1 and 1.2) (Polit and Beck, 2014).

Cultural bias is the phenomena which is based on our own traditional and cultural inclinations which facilitates our process in critiquing other cultures and their norms by our own standards (Fiske, 2002). Cultural bias can lead to misunderstandings, preconceptions, or beliefs that we hold towards other communities, people, or countries (Hofstede, 2001). In this case I already had some ideas of which values to expect, having spoken to many Hong Kong residents during my time as a lecturer and whilst visiting early childhood settings, consequently it is difficult to undertake this research without having some prior knowledge on the values presented by participants and I therefore had some previous bias towards what I suspected my findings could be. When planning this study, it was imperative that my interest around these issues were incorporated with minimal bias. Throughout I used the findings of the actual data gathered from all participants during the research data gathering time scale, and conversations held during the gathering of the data, I also gained wider knowledge during unofficial conversations preceding the data gathering (Palaiologou, Needham and Male, 2016).I ensured that I used the voices of the participants as they had been told to me in the interviews and the questionnaires, without changing their grammar or structure to ensure it was the participants’ voices shining through rather than my own values and subjectivities.  To ensure trustworthiness of the data generated, I sent copies of the interviews to the participants and asked them to check and clarify if they felt I had represented their voices, beliefs, and values as they had shared them with me. This helped ‘to increase the ‘trustworthiness of [the] research’ (Wellington, 2015, p. 223) and authenticity to enable me to attain reassurance that both the conduct and evaluation of research are honest and trustworthy (Given, 2012). By using participants’ true voices, I was able to transfer the credibility, the true values of findings and dependability of their values and beliefs. All interviewed participants were happy with the transcripts. I also asked if any of the participants wanted a copy of the completed thesis in the future and several participants have asked me to share the thesis with them at a later date.

All these aspects will have had an impact on my bias towards the research but feel it has also enabled me to ask myself more pertinent questions within the journey of the research. To give an example of my previous bias, I believed preceding the gathering of the data that all parents wanted their children to achieve highly academically, however after speaking to parents as well as teachers, this turned out to be only a small part of their beliefs for their children as other aspects such as being sociable, making good friends were more important and the academic side appeared to be more of a cultural aspect.

# 3.10 Data analysis.

To enable me to analyse the gathered data I used thematic analysis for all data in this research. I choose thematic analysis rather than narrative enquiry because narrative inquiry typically emphasizes the storytelling aspect and the individual’s context. Due to the pandemic and having to change my approach from face to face interviews and focus groups to online interviews and questionnaires, my focus was more on the content and meaning of specific themes rather than the stories themselves (Wells, 2011), thematic analysis would therefore align better with my objectives.

The data corpus (the whole body of gathered data) collected for this specific research consists of parent questionnaires, teacher questionnaires and parent interviews. This data makes up the corpus of the research. This is then divided into data sets, which is used to find specific themes for analysis. By using thematic analysis, I used the data corpus to guide me into the themes and data sets. The data gathered from the data corpus enabled me to have an active role in identifying patterns/themes and then selecting which ones were of interest to me as the researcher and sharing these themes within this thesis (Taylor and Ussher, 2001). By engaging with Braun and Clarke’s theory (2006:10) enables me to:

Report experiences, meanings and the reality of participants or it can be a constructionist method, which examines the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences and so on are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society.

I believe the discourses operating within society to be pertinent, as my research is taking into account the cultural aspects of society and the impact these may have on the findings of this research (Fiske, 2002). The advantage of using a thematic approach is that it can represent the meanings and reality of the participants as the interconnectedness of the data represents their values and gives it meaning. The themes can also examine the recalled values, events, experiences, and meanings the participants have discussed, and interpret how these discourses fit into the wider societal values by using wider theoretical material. ’Therefore, thematic analysis can be a method which works both to reflect reality, and to unpick or unravel the surface of reality’ (Willig, 2013:57).

The disadvantages of using a thematic approach, as discussed by Holloway and Todres (2003), can be the flexibility of the approach; this flexibility can set in motion an inconsistency or a lack of coherence within the development of the themes which are gathered within the data set, it is therefore important that as a researcher, I was consistent and knowledgeable within my approach. I did this by eliciting the same content and information given within the two sets of questionnaires and the findings from the interviews.

Finally, I found that by using the thematic approach to be a flexible method of finding associated values, ideas, and aspects which all participants found important or highlighted as being one of the values they held.

To establish which themes were important to start to understand my research question, and to start finding a way of understanding the importance of the values and other topics discussed through the different means of data gathering, I followed Braun and Clarke’s (2006) ‘Phases of thematic analyses’ to support me in gaining understanding of the data. They set out six steps to follow to undertake the thematic analysis, as discussed below.

For all sets of data, within the corpus of data, I initially created specific classifications based on the research questions and used a colour coding system to highlight the matching answers. This showed me answers which initially were part of the themes I had felt were important, but I also started to realise there were further different themes which I had originally not included. These themes were placed aside to be considered at a later stage of the thematic process and to see if these themes fitted into the research question. The section below shows in more detail how I undertook the various steps, using the headings as per Braun and Clarke (2006).

***Step one familiarity with the data:*** I familiarised myself with the data by gathering all data from the questionnaires and the interviews. All interviews were transcribed, and although this was a protracted procedure, I did agree with Cohen, et al. (2007: p 365), that transcribing ‘is a crucial step in interviewing for without it there is the potential for massive data loss, distortion and the reduction of complexity’. By transcribing the interviews (appendix 9 A), it became easier for me to make clear connections between the interviews themselves as well as the gathered data from the questionnaires (appendices 7,8 and 9).

I then used an Excel document to input all the data to find out where similarities or agreements had been shown. I used Excel as I am familiar with it. This took considerable time to compare all material to ensure I did not miss any aspects I felt were important, to gain wider understanding of the perspective of the various participant groups as well as gaining deeper understanding of my own positionality within their answers (appendices 7,8,9).

The questionnaire data for teacher and parent participants were amalgamated per question until all gathered information had been read and reread thereby gaining a deeper understanding as well as starting to note down some initial themes and codes (appendix 7.4.C). Yin (2014: 135) highlights that it is advantageous to start the data analysis by a ‘search for patterns, insights, or concepts that seem promising’. This inductive approach also meant that the themes I initially identified were strongly connected to the data itself (Patton, 1990).

***Step two, initial coding*** was undertaken whereby I grouped the same answers together, followed by grouping answers which I felt had similar meaning and by comparing the three data sets. I tried to arrange my data into some relatable groups, so answers which seemed at this stage to highlight the same or comparable values. At this stage I also started to look at which literature would support or contradict my data for the different relatable groups. During this stage I started to become aware of thought-provoking aspects within the data as well as some repeated patterns, which may have led into the themes eventually, however these were subsequently changed at a later stage. I did not use any specific coding (for example all answers of ‘respect’ or ‘honesty’ together) at this stage as I was concerned that some of the context could be lost by grouping findings too rigorously (Bryman, 2001)

***Step three, generation of themes***. By looking at the various responses I could start to see some patterns of repetition of topics whereby participants either stated an importance of a certain topic they found important for their family or the children in their educational care. This repetition meant that different participants brought up similar topics, and thus these needed to be investigated further as a theme. Parents in the interviews also discussed more widely aspects which were related to their choices for their children and these, often outliers, then became thought provoking topics to start a new theme. Some of the themes started to take shape here as initial thoughts and findings appeared to support these.

***Step four, reviewing the themes***,

At this stage I thought I had a good idea of what the themes were going to be, however after refining the initial topics and data gathered, it became apparent to me that the initial thoughts I had on themes needed to be revised and new themes started to emerge, as some parts of the data just didn’t fit into the categories I had identified. I then looked at all three sets of data (interview and the two different questionnaire responses), to establish if my new emerging themes worked within these sets of data. I looked to see if all sets of data had similar or actual dissimilar views on the topics which emerged. I started by telling the stories of the interviewed parents as here there were some topics which had also been highlighted by the other two groups of participants, this then led me to gaining more clarity in all aspects discussed by all participants which led to the final themes, ensuring that by using the parental stories I had not omitted any important or thought provoking values and topics in this study.

***Step five, defining and naming themes*,** was a challenge as here I had to really start to consolidate the material gathered into separate themes. Initially I started with a wide variety of themes. I returned to my research question to see which themes would start to give some clarity to my question and thoughts around the research topic as a whole and decided to consolidate the themes I felt were important to answering the research question and some of the themes were not used at this stage as they didn’t appear to fit in with the overall research topic. Some of the themes had subthemes and these were addressed at this stage as well by including them within the final themes.

***Step six, interpretation and reporting the themes and data gathered*** was the last step and here I felt that the theoretical freedom encouraged me to look at wider aspects which impacted on the research and on the participants’ views. As Braun and Clarke (2006:78), highlight: ‘Through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data.’

This thematic approach supported the discovery of various themes and patterns within the two different questionnaires to teachers and parents and the interviews with parents. Thematic analysis was chosen, as the flexibility of this method enabled me to find wider themes, which I had not considered previously. By using thematic analysis, I was able to cover different subjects, thematically, as well as including subjective individual experiences of how the participants personally see things and getting their lived experiences, therefore gaining a wider perspective on the themes (Robert-Holmes, 2014).

A thematic approach was decided upon for its flexible nature and its ease of complexity in comparison with the other mentioned theories of analysis. I felt that by using thematic analysis I could gain more useful information when specifically looking at the experiences, values, views, and beliefs of the participants (Nicolas, 2021). Taking a thematic approach to analysis felt like the most appropriate for the three different data sets: teacher questionnaires, parent questionnaires and parent interviews. Taking this approach gave the opportunity to use thematic analysis differently for each data set, revising research questions accordingly. I decided to take a similar approach across all three data sets and reviewed the emerging findings throughout the process. As I considered the responses from each participant, this resulted in a deeper understanding of the data sets.

 Using thematic analysis highlighted themes which were very similar across parents’ questionnaires and teachers’ questionnaires and included a wealth of descriptions by the participants, which I was then able to link to theory to inform understanding of meaning, therefore giving a deeper understanding of what the data is telling us in the end (Thorne, 2000, King, 2004, Braun and Clarke ,2006).

This chapter has critically discussed the methods and methodology used for this study. The chapter includes an introduction and some of my own personal observations which impacted on my choice for this study. The context and location of the study highlighted some underlying cultural values, and this was followed by the rationale for the study. The study has a qualitative approach and includes interviews with parents as well as questionnaires with parents and teachers. The chapter further shares the theoretical approaches which underpin this study which are a socio-cultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1978) and bio-ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, Velez-Agosto, et al., 2017). I further included a section on the ethical issues within this study and the power relations which needed to be considered.

The next chapter shares structural discourses of parents and teachers which draw together the stories as told by the parents in their interviews and the data gathered through the questionnaires as given by parents and teachers. I will further present the findings within a thematic discussion to address the principal research question.

# Chapter 4 Analysis of data and themes.

# 4.1 Structural discourses of parents and teachers.

In the previous chapter, I presented the methods and methodology of this study. This chapter will use the data to draw together the stories as told by the parents in their interviews; it will further present the findings within a thematic discussion to address the principal research question.

This chapter reiterates who the participants in this study are. The cultural legacies of Hong Kong are linked to the Zodiac calendar as a frame for the narrative which holds together the individual and the collective stories of the participants in the study (4.2). The voices of the participants (4.3) are shared through their illustrative stories within this chapter, and this is followed by an overview of the parental background of the interviewed parent participants. This gives the chapter a clear focus as to who the parents are and what they believe to be important for their children. The teacher (4.4) and the parent (4.5) questionnaires are discussed. This is followed by the individual themes which arose from these illustrative stories are then highlighted (4.6). The analysis and coding of the interviews and questionnaires and the uncovered themes are discussed (4.7). Parents’ backgrounds are included for clarity to gain understanding of who the interviewed and questionnaire participants parents and teachers are (4.7.1) This is followed by the initial uncovered themes. These themes (4.7.2) are (4.7 a-g) Chinese language and culture, academic approaches, choice of kindergarten, multicultural inclusivity and acceptance, curriculum and kindergarten interviews and social skills. Wider observations by the parent participants are also included as some of these have an important impact on the choices the parents have made for their child.

For this research, I wanted to establish if there were common values or if specific values appeared to be shared in early years settings as a general approach. I wanted to uncover if these were comparable to the values parents would wish for their children. I was interested in whether parents overall made a conscious decision to choose a specific kindergarten to suit their values or if they choose a kindergarten which they felt fitted into the cultural notion, which appears to be specific to the Hong Kong population, of ‘winning at the starting line’ (Cheung, 2009 and Chua, 2011). The values detailed by parent and teacher participants could be the values embedded at home by the parents or by teachers in the setting they work, or could indeed be their own personal values, gained through their own cultural capital or funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll and Amanti, 2009, MA, 2016).

I begin this chapter by reiterating who the participants are, their demographic characteristics (table 2) and during which timespan (table 3) I gained data from their participation. The data collection took part during the political unrest in Hong Kong and the following global pandemic which will have had an impact on some of the answers within this research.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Teacher participants who completed questionnaires. | Parent/carer participants who completed questionnaires | Parent/ carer participants who were interviewed. |
| 66 teachers all Asian/ Hong Kong background and upbringing who taught in kindergartens. | 38 parents / carers of children in kindergarten age group. | 6 parents/carers who had children in the kindergarten age range. |
| Age of participants 20-35 years old | A widespread variety of geographical backgrounds within Hong Kong, to encompass different views from different socio-economic areas within Hong Kong.  Sex of participants unknown as the questionnaire was anonymous- online. | Participants who were migrants from the USA and England, and participants who were Hong Kong born.  5 female and one male participant. |

Table 2. Demographics of participants

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Teacher questionnaires | Parent questionnaires | Parent interviews |
| Indicated as: | P=Teacher Participants | C= Parents and Carers | Parent interviews have been anonymised and pseudonyms given within the text to indicate different parent interview participants |
| No of responses | 70 hard copies distributed, 66 returned | Online questionnaire distributed 38 responses | Reply from questionnaires of interest in undertaking an interview, 7 initial responses.  6 parents engaged with the interview.  1 gave feedback on paper. |
| When under  taken | Undertaken during October 2019- during political unrest in Hong Kong | Questionnaires distributed.  1st of November 2020  Survey closed 1st of February 2021 (during period of Covid restrictions in Hong Kong and the UK) | All online Interviews undertaken during March 2021 (during period of Covid restrictions in Hong Kong and the UK) |

Table 3. Participants and timescale of data collection.

The chapter will then discuss the cultural legacies and the voices of the parent participants. To give a clearer view of the parents who were interviewed, the next section will share their illustrative stories and their backgrounds. The following sections will highlight topics which were discussed by the Teacher Questionnaire responses and the Parent /Carer questionnaire responses followed by the responses from the interviewed parents, and this is followed by the overall themes found throughout the research and data collection. The chapter then concludes.

# 4.2 Cultural legacies.

One of the key cultural legacies is the interpretation of the Chinese Zodiac calendar (Mushro, 2022). The Zodiac calendar is based on the changes of the moon and each month is measured by the transforming size of the moon; there are twelve months in the year, as in the western calendar, but there are also twelve years in the Chinese calendar. A different animal represents each of these years.

This collection of animal names for months of the year frame the overall year and can be seen in the form of many different stories, which explain the backstory of the Zodiac calendar (see synopsis below, for one interpretation of the story of the swimming race).

The Zodiac therefore holds together the two narratives of the individual animal and the collective story, as well as introducing the individual struggles and beliefs of the animals in the story.

This offers a suitable background through which to communicate the diverse stories as told by all participants during interviews, as well as sharing the additional narrative given by participants in their questionnaire responses. The stories and narratives of the participants in this study show the individual as well as collective struggles and beliefs of the participants regarding choices they have to make and all the wider influences, which impact these decisions. I have briefly recounted the story of the Zodiac in the boxed section in box 2.

*Before there was a Chinese calendar, the Jade emperor invited all the animals of the kingdom (13 in total) to a swimming race. Though small,* ***Rat*** *was clever, ambitious, and quick-witted and managed to outwit* ***Ox*** *and his friend* ***Cat,*** *by climbing on the back of the Ox during the race and thus preserving his strength and win the race. As each animal swam ashore, the emperor named the years in that order. There were only twelve finishers. There was, however, a great celebration among all thirteen animals.*

*Not only does the Chinese zodiac differ from Western astrology but the monthly calendar differs too, with each Chinese month set according to the moon cycle. Thus, Chinese New Year varies according to when the first new moon of the year begins.*

(Casey, (2008: p 1)

Box 2. Story of the Zodiac calendar.

The story of the Zodiac as recounted in Box 2 highlights the different characters displayed as animals with different backgrounds and origins, just as we can see in families in Hong Kong. The story shows some of the different ways in which the animals win the race, this can be compared with the ‘Winning from the starting line’ (Ren and Edwards, 2017) concept. Finally, each animal swims ashore, this can be related to all children who eventually all complete their journey through the education system, some will do well, and some will arrive at their destination a bit later, but all with values learned along the journey. Here we can make a comparison to the changing values parents and teachers as well as children, experience through their lifetime and depending on their needs as a family, as well as individual needs and values. This proposes a suitable framework through which to communicate the unique narratives and values, as shared by the parents and teachers related to their children and the values and beliefs of kindergartens.

This research is recounting the voices of the participants to share the different values and to gain an understanding of these values (3.5.2.). It is further gaining an understanding between the western and Asian value differences, like the two different calendars described in the story, and how these may influence values in a multicultural landscape. Chinese cultural legacies will be represented within this section as well as western values as discussed by the participants.

A cultural legacy of specifically Hong Kong is the ‘Winning at the starting line’(Ren and Edwards, 2017, Cheung, 2009; Pearson and Rao, 2006). This specific notion is a well-known saying in Hong Kong and means that parents want to prepare their child prior to starting school to ensure they have gained strong academic skills to give them the best chance of a good academic journey, (1.7) (Fung, 2007; Fung and Lam, 2009)

The two cultural aspects of the Zodiac calendar and ‘winning at the starting line,’ can be seen to be intertwined as they both have an element of a race, the race to be the first on the Zodiac calendar and the first to do well academically. This competitive notion has been discussed in Hong Kong literature where academia has been highlighted as one of the most important aspects of child development (Chan and Chan 2002; Yuen, 2005; Cheung, 2009; Chua, 2011).

The following section will start by reflecting upon the voices of the participants and the values these voices are portraying within their narratives.

# 4.3 Voices of the participants.

I acknowledge the voices of participants within this thesis, as I felt it was imperative to hear the stories of the parents and the teachers. This approach will establish if the voices of the parents agree or disagree with the literature, discussed in chapter 2, which mostly highlights the academic and political aspects of child development (Wong and Rao, 2015, Ren and Edwards, 2017, EDB, 2000, Watkins, 2009) and I found no evidence in the literature which argued for listening and hearing the voices and values of the parents who live in Hong Kong and the teachers who work in kindergartens in Hong Kong (3.5.2).

To enable me to start to interpret and gain some understanding of parental values it is important to listen to their stories and their voices (Bryman, 2016). Parent and teacher voices represented in the following sections, their language, grammar and spelling as written or spoken by the parents or teachers, have not been altered to ensure that the genuine participant voice is upheld verbatim. Therefore spelling, grammar and sentence structure as told by the participants has not been altered. As names have been anonymised and pseudonyms have been used, this is ensuring that participants are not recognised and therefore any embarrassment using grammatically incorrect language is taken out of the equation. As discussed previously, this is to enable the multiple voices within this research to be heard and represented (Jackson and Mazzei, 2009). It is important to listen to parents’ as well as teachers’ voices as parents are important in influencing their children’s learning and play practices at home and at the educational setting they have chosen.

# 4.4 Teacher questionnaires.

This section will discuss the findings from the questionnaires completed by the 66 Teachers in Hong Kong.

**Results Teacher questionnaire**

This section will follow the format of the questions in the order they were asked in the teacher questionnaire. Comparisons will be made between the various questions to show where participants have given answers which are linked to the question or topics which have arisen throughout. This is supported by visual charts which show the findings overall and the top ten answers given by all teachers to show the importance of the values they hold.

**Teachers highlight respect, honesty, politeness, love and other values.**

The first question in the Teacher questionnaire asks the participants:

As a teacher, which values do you think your kindergarten or school should teach the children (write as many as you can think of).

This question sets the scene for the rest of the questions asked, which all relate to values. Participants had been told the aim of the research, before answering any questions by using the information sheet (appendix 2b), as discussed previously.

The values recorded by the participants could be the values taught in the setting they work, or could indeed be their own personal values, gained through their own cultural capital or funds of knowledge (MA, 2016, Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2009). To generalise their values, there would need to be a more in-depth discussion with participants. However, for the purpose of this research I wanted to establish if there were more widespread values or if specific values appeared to be taught in early years settings as a general approach. To enable to start gaining some insight into these values it is important to engage with knowledge sharing, as an integral component of the research, hence why local teachers and local parents were asked to participate to give this insight.

The findings from the completed teacher participants’ questionnaires are displayed in appendix 7.

Appendix 7.1 a and b show the results from question 1, whereby the findings show that respect as a value, was mentioned most often by the teacher participants, filial piety was also highlighted and this could be grouped together with respect as it has a similar meaning but comes from the philosophical and ethical teachings founded by Confucius (Park and Chesla, 2017), where filial piety is seen as an important virtue whereby respect and obedience as well as care for the parents and elderly in the community are seen as a high priority and virtue (Chen et al 2007, Wang et al 2010 a). When extracting the most used answers (respect, honesty, politeness, love, responsibility, independence and sharing) as seen in appendix 7.1 b, we can start to see the emergence of some themes, these will need to be compared with themes from the following questions to enable the research to use these for further exploration within the parent interviews. These emerging themes will be discussed in more depth in the next chapter.

**Curiosity, honesty, and academic values.**

Question two asked the participants if they felt that the values, they discussed in question one, were Confucian values. (‘Are these Confucian values?’)

This question was asked to establish if there were specific cultural values according to the participants as this may influence their answers and their views of how values need to be included within the setting. Schwartz (2006, p 137) discusses cultural values as ‘the rich complex of meanings, beliefs, practices, symbols, norms, and values prevalent among people in a society’. As the research was undertaken in Hong Kong where Confucianism is a part of the society, it was felt that this was an important aspect of the research.

The findings show a large variety of answers, out of the sixty-six participants, fourteen did not complete this question, upon discussion afterwards it was found that they did not understand the difference between their general and personal values, and if these were specific to the Confucian culture. The participants felt that these values were part of their everyday life, and they could not distinguish between general values or specific Confucian values (Inglehart and Baker, 2000). This may indicate the interweaving of cultural values within societal values or may indicate a lack of knowledge from the participants regarding specific Confucian values (Stern et al, 1995). The participants age may have had an influence on this question as overall, they were in a twenties age bracket with a few exceptions of teachers being in the thirties/forties age bracket, this is also highlighted by Arslan (2018: N.P.) in their discussion regarding whether cultural and traditional values still important in society today, in which they highlight that

For an active transmission of culture from one generation to another generation, it has to be understood into codes, oral, statue, and faith that serve as the figurative means of transformation of cultural moral amongst generations.

We can see this further in the answers given below by participants.

Some extra deliberations in the questionnaire showing individual participant voices, also highlighted the importance of some other aspects, such as mentioned by participant (1), who discusses the value of curiosity which leads to exploration:

*Always be curious to explore the world, it is hard for the teacher to define when to stop the action of exploration of the child.*

Another participant (2) discussed after completing the questionnaire how she perceived some values and how they should be put in practice, she stated on the questionnaire:

*Honesty, most of the time you should be honest but not every time. This relates to respect, whereby being honest could be perceived as being disrespectful and therefore at times it is better not to be honest.*

Although question one did not raise many academic values, there were some links to the importance of academic outcomes, linked to the question if these were Confucian values, participants must have felt academic values linked to the Confucian values, as answers given were: discussed in question 2 and question 6. Participant (3), commented as follows:

*Hong Kong, mostly want children to have a good academic result, parents want their children to be the best in all compared to others. Great effort is made to equal high marks. Only let children learn things that are good academically (maths).*

This is further explained by this participant (3) in question 6, where the participant answers that she feels that parents choose a particular kindergarten based on their values as she states:

*Yes, because this can ensure that their children can achieve what they (the parents) want, also they can let the children be successful person in the future.*

Thereby making a link to academic values again.

Further links to ‘high academic’ results are made by another participant (4), when they state (in Question 2) that a *‘High academic result shows that you are a good kid’,* this is further discussed in question 6 by this same participant, where they say that *parents may just consider which kindergarten school can improve their children's academic level.* The participant then gives their personal opinion as they state: *I think parents should choose a particular kindergarten according to the values taught there, because academic level is not represented to everything. Those values of confident, sharing is still important in their life journey.*

Participant 5 believes that the most important Confucian values *is the result, (*how many marks*), not the learning process, and attitude.* This again makes a link to academic values and how this participant believes Confucian values are perceived. This participant also states children should control their emotions (‘*not easy to cry*’).

Although the answers on the charts (Appendix 7.2 a+b) don’t agree with these statements regarding academic achievements, it is important to gain this wider discussion with the participants as it gives a new meaning to the results.

The wider perceived Confucian values can be seen in appendix 7.2, where honesty, polite(ness), respect and responsibility score again high out of all the answers given by the teacher participants, however these need to be read in accordance with the wider feedback from the teachers as they clearly also highlight academic values but have not specifically named them as a Confucian value. I therefore believe that academic attainment is more of a translucent notion which has many angles within society, rather than being an outspoken Confucian value. Values run through society in a more implicit manner rather than an explicit manner (Schwartz, 1999).

**Loving others, exploration and making choices.**

Question 3 asked the participants if they felt that the values, they discussed in question one, were western values? (‘Are these western values,’ please highlight which ones)

Twelve of the participants left this section blank, again upon verbal discussion after the questionnaire and when I enquired how they had felt completing it, the feedback was that they were unsure of which values were Confucian and which were western values, as discussed in question 2.

This question was to determine if teachers in Hong Kong feel that western influences may have had an impact on values portrayed within Hong Kong in early childhood settings such as kindergartens, nurseries, playgroups, schools etc. and to see if this then has had an impact on what is being taught in these settings.

Participant 1 stated that the Montessori influence was clearly seen within kindergartens within Hong Kong, one of the Montessori influences according to this participant is to *protect yourself, love others and be nice to our environment*.

Participant 3 states *Let children choose what they want according to their interests, the process is more important than the result.*

Other aspects highlighted throughout were:

*Exploring what the children want to learn,’ ‘exploring the interest’ ‘cooperate with other children’ ‘learning by Doing, first hand experiences.*

Participant 28 highlighted that Hong Kong is an international city and people accept different values and beliefs. This participant (28) further highlights in the next questionnaire question (are they combinations of both (Confucian and western) values), that *Hong Kong combines western values and accept other peoples’ values and cultures as people with different cultures live in Hong Kong, we accept and combine them. One other aspect for Hong Kong* *people, they think as son or daughter that we need to respect our parents and give them better living when they are old.* This last part (respect for parents) can be seen a specific Confucian value, as it is classed as filial piety, as previously discussed.

Participant 43 highlights, that western values *foster each child's intrinsic desire for knowledge,* then adds that Hong Kong is *surrounded by many natural resources and facilities (such as the beach, parks, green, fields, community hall and gym, football fields)*. It can only be assumed that this answer intends to show the possibilities for fostering this knowledge in children, although it is unclear how this may link to specific western values.

The wider answers given to question 3 can be seen in appendix 7.3 a+b, which show again that respect is still one of the top answers, this shows that the participants feel that this is an important value to hold. They also believe, according to their answers, that independence, love, and freedom to grow and learn, are more specific values linked to western cultures and values rather than the Confucian culture and values.

**Combining shared values.**

Question four asks the participants if they feel the values discussed in question one, are a combination of Confucian and western values? (‘Do you think they are a combination of both those values?’). This was asked to determine if participants felt that there were differences in Confucian and western values or if they see values as a shared fusion of the two value systems.

Forty-one participants either agreed that yes these were a combination of Confucian and western values and highlighted some specific values they felt were shared values, twenty-two participants either did not answer the question or just stated: ‘no’, without further explanation, which makes it difficult to judge if they understood the question or if they felt the values were very different between Confucian values and western values. This may therefore impact on further answers given in the remaining questions of the questionnaire. Overall, the participants who completed the question agreed that there was a clear overlap of the two different cultural views, western and Confucian and they held broadly the same values which they wanted for the children. Below are examples of what the participants highlighted.

Some of the participants discussed their opinion further which gave some rich data.

Participant (P) 64: *I think they are a combination. Because in Chinese we teach things like love, righteousness, politeness, and in western values are love and conscience, they are both the same.*

P 63: *Yes they are a combination of both sets of values, it is because all of those values are about people and getting along with others.*

P 62: *Those values have the characteristics of both sides; therefore, I think they are a combination of both those values*.

P 60: *I think all of the above are shared values by both Confucian and western values. That’s the ways and necessity to live.*

P 58: *I think those values are a combination, even if Hong Kong or the west use different words to express the values, the meanings are the same. I believe that those values became universal values.*

Other participants mention that the values are shared or a combination of values because they are *human centred* (P 56), *human based and important* (P 55), *due to the convenience of the internet, values can be shared* (P 53), *most values are shared because they are basic* (P 52), *they are shared because they are a social attitude* (P 45) *or a shared social responsibility* (P 41),*values are a standard of personal moral in society, which means how to be a good person* (P 37), *they are shared , even if they are Chinese or western they are able and necessary to learn and be the citizen, both sets of values promote good values to people* (P 33), (P 18) *highlights that these combined values are taught by all teachers.*(P17) states that the *combination of the values depend on the cultural aspect and intercultural integration of HK (which Is personal to people).*

It is also discussed that: *a combination of Confucian and western values has gradually integrated into Hong Kong education systems* (P 16), this can be seen by some of the answers when participants discuss Montessori influences within the education system.

There is a highlighting of the need for respect and again P 2 discusses this as *a combination (of values) always emphasises that we should respect the elderly*. P 28 highlights that the values are shared but that there are also some more specific Confucian values*: Hong Kong combines western values and accept other people’s values and cultures as people with different cultures live in Hong Kong, we accept and combine them. One other aspect for Hong Kong people, they think as son or daughter that we need to respect our parents and give them better living when they are old (P 28).*

**A willingness to learn or a willingness to help others?**

What values do you think Parents want you (as a teacher) to teach to their children?

This question was asked as it is important to gain a view from the teachers and what their beliefs are regarding parental values and their expectations for their children when they attend the early childhood setting. This teacher expectation on values may differ from what parents expect or hope for when they sign their child up for a particular setting. Here I can start to gather data to enable me to either verify or start to question the values and ideas of both teachers and parents/carers.

There were a vast variety of answers to this question, (appendix 7.4), but when participants elaborated on their answer rather than just giving a word, it can be seen that academic attainment and links to this topic are running through the answers. Some teachers gave a short answer of a specific value whilst others added wider information, and this was then categorised to find the main values (appendices 7.4 a+b).

The wider discussions gave rich data, and this has given me the opportunity to start to get some idea of what teachers believe parents want for their child, and even though the language of academic attainment is not used throughout there are clear indications that this is seen as one of the important aspects. Some participants mention that children should have a: *willingness and enjoyment to learning,* whilst others clearly discuss *interview readiness, learning attitudes and learning interest to enable the children to do better* *in primary school as well as the engagement of homework and ability to complete this alone at this young age.*

Further data gathered shows that teachers commented on wider values in addition to appendix 7.4 a+b. Some answers did not highlight specific values such as P 33 who stated, *All the values that are good for children.* But others were more specific for example when looking at more caring attributes*;* P 25 stated: *Send love to everyone* and P 52 highlighted *willingness to help others*.

Other teachers were more focussed again on academic values such as follows: P 27 *willing to learn* which is echoed by P 26 who states *enjoy learning,* P 16 mentions that parents want e*ducation* for their child and P 13 states: *Interview skill for the primary school interview*. This is echoed by P 5 who says, *learning attitudes, parents care about that and they hope they can be nurtured when they study in kindergarten, so they can study well in Primary school,* P 3 *Let children interest in learning, that can have positive heart in the academic subject, also good social development with other children’.* P 58 states: *How to be a successful child, e.g. get full marks* and this is followed by; P 54 *Ambition*, P 53 *result orientated* and P 45 *Attitude.*

On a different topicP 47 mentions professional abilities which is also mentioned by P 48. It can be assumed that these two participants were sat next to each other during the completion of the questionnaire, and maybe discussed this comment, as this appears to be a standalone comment which is not really easy to place within an early years setting as a value for the child, but rather as a value for the teaching staff.

P 59 highlights several aspects which have been seen as a thread throughout the answers given by all participants, P 59 states: *respect for parents/teachers/elderly, sharing with peers and being thankful for everything*. This is echoed by P 62who states: *manners, they hope their child can gain manners, when they see the elderly or anyone else, and this is a basic behaviour, and it is a good way of communication* P 65 also states *to be honest and brave to face new places or things*, P 23 *Respect for parents and listen and follow what parents say*. P 6 says: *Maybe some traditional parents want me to teach manners to their children and how to be a ‘good girl/boy*’ and P 52 states a *willingness to help others*.

Other aspects mentioned by the teacher participants are courage, open mindedness, justice, different language skills (English and Chinese), be hard working, and be a good person.

Looking at appendices 7.4 a+b, we can see that the same values are mentioned, and the most discussed values are respect, honesty, and politeness. Academic achievement is not mentioned within these answers, however as discussed previously, some wider answers which delve deeper into the values do link with attitudes to learning. Through asking these questions, some topics are already emerging, and these will be compared with the answers from the other research methods (parent questionnaire and interviews).

**Respect, honesty, politeness, love, responsibility, independence, academic attainment or all of these?**

Do you think parents choose a particular kindergarten based on the values taught there? Why do you think they may do this? These two questions were asked to establish if teachers perceived that there were specific value-based attributes to specific settings and if these would attract parents. If this is the case, then this may be an indicator for change in other settings who may not have these specific attributes of values they teach the children in their care. However, if teachers don’t think there are specific values parents are looking for, for their child then this may indicate that settings have not taken parental views and values into consideration when designing their developmental approaches within the setting.

The answers given by the teachers varied but here themes started to emerge. Some of the answers given fit into several categories and therefore these answers may feature more than once in the themes discussed in chapter 5. The themes highlighted in this question may not be the overall themes used at a later stage, here I am exploring the different answers and as discussed by Braun and Clarke (2006) initial coding was undertaken and this will lead to finding the themes for further exploration at a later stage.

Appendix 7.4. C gives a view of the quotations given by the participants whilst answering question 6, which have been put into some initial themes. These themes emerged from the data given by the teachers. Various topics came to light, but overall participants highlighted that they believed parents choose a particular kindergarten for the personal development of the child, aspects of religion, the curriculum and the child’s future academic attainment. These different themes also highlighted further underlying themes which added to the previous findings of the previous questions in the questionnaire. The following themes of respect, honesty, politeness, love, responsibility, independence, and academic attainment became apparent throughout the data gathering process.

Below in table 4, an overview of responses to question 6, there is an example of some of the findings and how they link to the various themes which are emerging. The final themes will be discussed further in chapter 5.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Themes | Subtheme | Supporting Quotations |
| 1 Respect | **parents**  **Teachers**  **Elderly** | **P 59** states ‘respect for parents/teachers/elderly’  **P 23** ‘Respect for parents and listen and follow what parents say’  **P 2** discusses values as ‘a combination (of values) always emphasises that we should respect the elderly.’  **P 28** ‘One other aspect for HK people, they think as son or daughter that we need to respect our parents and give them better living when they are old’ |
| 2 Honesty |  | **P 2** ‘Honesty, most of the time you should be honest but not every time’ ‘This relates to respect, whereby being honest could be perceived as being disrespectful and therefore at times it is better not to be honest’. |
| 3 Politeness |  |  |
| 4 Love |  | **P 64** ‘I think they (values)are a combination (Confucian and western). Because in Chinese we teach things like love, righteousness, politeness, and in western values are love and conscience, they are both the same’ |
| 5 Responsibility |  | **P 16** ‘Yes, it is because the parents hope their children can learn correct values in kindergarten.’ |
| 6 Independence |  | **P 27** ‘Yes, because they want their child could grow to be what they want and they may think the school could help them (P 27 also mentions being academic, forest school and growing up happy)’  **P 26** ‘Yes, because Kindergarten is the 2nd home to their child, that their child may learn a lot of life values in here, so this is why they based on values taught there’. |
| 7 Academic attainment |  | **P 4** ’High academic result shows that you are a good kid’, parents may just consider which kindergarten school can improve their children's academic level’ **P 4**, then gives their personal opinion as they state : ‘I think parents should choose a particular kindergarten according to the values taught there, because academic level is not represent to everything. Those values of confident, sharing is still important in their life journey.’  **P 7** Believes that the most important Confucian value ‘is the result, (how many marks), not the learning process, and attitude’.  **P 27** ‘Willing to learn’ which is echoed by **P 26** who states ‘enjoy learning’  **P 16** mentions that parents want ‘education’ for their child  **P 13** states ‘interview skill for the primary school interview’  **P 5** ‘Learning attitudes, parents care about that, and they hope they can be nurtured when they study in kindergarten, so they can study well in Primary school’  **P 3** ‘Let children interest in learning, that can have positive heart in the academic subject, also good social development with other children’  **P 58** ‘How to be a successful child, e.g. get full marks’  **P 54** ‘Ambition’ **P 53** ‘result orientated’ **P 45** ‘Attitude’  **P 42** ‘Doing homework by themselves’,  **P 40** ‘Practice homework’  **P 43** highlights that western values ‘foster each child's intrinsic desire for knowledge’  **P 3** ‘HK, mostly want children to have a good academic result, parents want their children to be the best in all compared to others. Great effort is made to equal high marks. Only let children learn things that are good academically (maths)’  **P 3 also highlights:** ‘This can ensure that their children can achieve what they (the parents) want, also they can let the children be successful person in the future’ |

Table 4. Overview of question 6 links to themes.

The teacher questionnaires which are discussed in this section, highlighted that teachers have a wide variety of values themselves as well as showing the values they believe parents want for their children. The values have been shown in the appendices (appendix 7). Values discussed are sharing that teachers believe that respect, honesty, good academic results as well as learning to respect your parents and elderly people are important. The teachers do not specifically discuss the academic impact but look more towards social values and they further believe that Confucian and western values have a similar approach and that these have been amalgamated within Hong Kong and therefore have become combined values rather than specific Confucian or specific western values.

# 4.5 Parent/carer questionnaires.

This section will discuss the findings from the questionnaires completed by the 38 Parents/carers in Hong Kong. The parents were approached via social media and various areas within Hong Kong were added to Facebook and LinkedIn to have a wider scope of parental backgrounds and areas where they live. It was not clear from the responses where parents lived or what their background was as this was not asked as part of the questionnaires as the results needed to relate to their values regards the children and the values for their children they discussed.

This section will follow the format of the questions in the order they were asked in the parent/carer questionnaire. The findings are supported by visual charts (appendix 8) which show the findings overall given by all parent/carer participants to show the importance of the values they hold.

**How old is your child?**

This question was asked to determine if the participants had a child in the correct age category for this research criterion.

All participants had children between the ages of 2.5 years old and 8 years old. However, the parent with the older child also had a younger child so still fitted the criterion.

**Does your child attend a kindergarten?**

This question was asked to determine if the child attended a kindergarten as this could reflect on the parent/carer's views of the questions which followed. Only one parent out of the 38 participants said their child did not attend a kindergarten, the parent also added that they were looking for a kindergarten for the child to start soon.

**How did you choose the kindergarten/nursery your child attends?**

Parents gave a wide variety of answers (appendix 8 B). Parents mainly highlighted convenient locations, and this could be convenient near their home or their workplace. They also highlighted the philosophy and curriculum of the kindergarten as well as recommendations from other parents and their own feelings about the place after a visit and the love for the children that was shown by the staff. Good links to a primary school featured, as well as the ability to see other children’s work they had completed and if the kindergarten had a project approach or if there was a focus on play.

**What values do you want the kindergarten/nursery to teach your child?**

This question was asked to find out which values parents felt were important for their child at the start of their educational journey.

Parents mostly shared that they wanted their child to learn to be kind, to be capable and confident, as well as loving and caring. Other aspects they mentioned were for their child to be respectful, have a love of learning, make good friendships, and accept or be open minded regarding different cultures. The full list of discussed values can be seen in appendix 8 C.

Table 5. Overview of most mentioned values.

This shows that although parents in the previous question highlighted that they looked at good links to a primary school, they also want all other values to be taken into account when it comes to the early education of their children.

**Which of the following values do you find important for your child?**

This more prescriptive question was asked certain values had become apparent during the questionnaires with the teachers, and I wanted to establish if parents/carers had a similar value system

The values asked in a tick box and were as follows:

Box 3. Which of the following Values do you find important for your child?

*Which of the following Values do you find important for your child?*

Personal Values

Religion

Educational Attainment/achievement

Respect

Honesty

Politeness

Love

Responsibility

Independence

Other

Participants ticked the answers they felt were important and they showed that they felt that love, personal values, and respect as well as independence were most important out of the choices. All other options were also highlighted by parents (Appendix 8 D).

Parents also included other values not mentioned in the original options within the question when asked if there were any other values they felt were important. These can be seen below.

|  |
| --- |
| * Happiness |
| * Happy learning |
| * To play and socialise. No pressure. |
| * I would add Respect (for others) and Honesty to ‘Independence’ as well. |
| * Confidence |
| * Politeness and respect |
| * I would actually choose more than one of the above of optional, but Love is my priority. |
| * Educational achievement |
| * Honest |
| * Caring |
| * Resilience |
| * Enjoy learning |

**How far do you travel to take your child to kindergarten/nursery?**

This question was asked to establish if parents perceived they needed to travel some distance to find the kindergarten they identified as the correct one for their child. Some parents travelled further than others (appendix 8 E) but there was a wide variety between travelling within the close vicinity to travelling further than 35 minutes to reach the kindergarten of choice. This choice of travelling a certain distance could also be impacted by the child attending a kindergarten near the workplace of the parent.

The parent questionnaires showed a variety of values parents wanted for their children. On the one hand they clearly show they are willing to travel further for their chosen kindergarten, although this may also be impacted by choosing a kindergarten closer to their work or home for convenience. Parents also show that they find the kindergarten’s philosophy and curriculum important as well as the links they have to a primary school, thereby touching upon the academic educational side of their choices. Parents further share that there are a wide variety of values which they find important such as the values discussed in question 5 where they had an opportunity to choose some preset values but also to add their own values.

The overall results of these questions answered by the parent/carers will be further discussed in chapter 5.

The following section will look at the findings of the interviews held with parents.

# 4.6 Parental Illustrative stories.

‘*What else can we hear if we listen carefully’?*

Rosenbaum (2023: 1)

This section will discuss the interviewed participant parents’ stories and their backgrounds and will explore their views on values and if these are linked with cultural and academic discourses, or if these take on a different form. Interview data support some of the themes discussed at a later stage (Chapter 5). These stories as told by the parents, demonstrate different examples of value-laden discourses (Ward, 2021), but these are not used to attempt to generalise from them, in fact the stories reflect the diversity of the parents and their different cultural backgrounds which have merged within Hong Kong. By listening carefully (Rosenbaum, 2023), to the parental stories we can see that there are some specific Hong Kong cultural influences which impact on their decision making for their children.

Three parents were born in Hong Kong (Nick, Christine, and Carole) and have an Asian Hong Kong cultural background, and one parent originated from the USA (Joanne), and two parents were originally from England (Esther and Jane) and have migrated to Hong Kong, to live and work there. Five parents were female, and one was male. Names of parents have been anonymised and their voices are represented in *italics.*

During the interviews, parents were asked about their views of choosing a kindergarten for their child and what they felt was important for their child. We further talked about which values they want the kindergarten to share with their children, as well as if the academic side of the kindergarten plays a big role in the choices they have made for their children.

# 4.7 Parents’ stories and themes.

The parents’ stories as highlighted during the interviews with parents, and themes as discussed below, have brought to the foreground a variety of themes which are setting the scene for the themes in chapter 5.

This section will introduce the parents whom I interviewed and their backgrounds as well as share what has influenced their choices for their children. It will further discuss the themes as highlighted by the parent participants.

These initial themes were found by transcribing all interviews and comparing the transcripts to see which specific areas parents had brought to light and these themes were found to represent ‘patterns of shared meaning, underpinned by a central organising concept’ Braun and Clarke (2022:230).

Initial open coding of the data uncovered within the interviews resulted in eight themes, these were each coded by highlighting the different answers with a specific colour (Appendix 9). These different colour codes highlighted the different responses from each participant. These were not only the specific values they explicitly mentioned but also the underlying implicit values which became apparent. All further answers which were uncovered throughout were added to an Excel sheet (Appendix 10) to see if there were additional common values and beliefs which were mentioned.

The themes uncovered from the initial colour coding which was undertaken on hard copies were Language and culture, academic approaches, choice of kindergarten, multicultural inclusivity and acceptance, impact of curriculum and kindergarten interviews, social skills and any wider observations made by the parents on aspects, which did not fit a specific category. These themes are not the final themes but are highlighted here to start to gain an understanding of the parents’ feelings, beliefs, and values in relation to their children and their children’s education as well as their home values. The analysis of the final themes will be discussed in chapter 5.

# 4.7.1 Parental background.

To start to understand the parents I begin with a short synopsis of their backgrounds, in their own words, as this will have had an influence on their values and beliefs.

**Esther’s story** (Full interview transcript in Appendix 9 B):

*In order to survive Hong Kong and in order to survive the education system here in HK…. realistically if we want our children to get into a good school and give them a good foundation and backing with their Chinese language and mathematics, we have to compromise* [on a more academic approach] *but it seems it’s the only way to get them into a good education.*

Esther has 2 children and is a lecturer at a University in Hong Kong, delivering Early Childhood courses to teaching assistants on the diploma course. Esther is studying towards a master’s degree in human rights.

Esther and her husband are originally from the UK but have lived all over the world. Esther’s family however has a Chinese/ Hong Kong background. They settled in Hong Kong due to work opportunities and have chosen to bring up their children in a Chinese environment.

**Nick’s story** (Full interview transcript in Appendix 9 C)**:**

*Well, I always say to my Mrs, I prefer children to grow to become a good person, like not good personality but I would say just like a normal good behaviour person other than well-educated and most importantly he needs to behave himself, that is life business.*

Nick was born and raised in Hong Kong. Initially his wife Barbara, also a Hong Kong national, answered my questionnaire online and had agreed to take part in the interview, but on the agreed date she had another commitment, so her husband Nick stepped in to take part. The fascinating aspect of this was that their answers to certain aspects differed and therefore showed that although both parents have grown up in the same culture, they had different approaches and opinions regarding their values for their children.

Both answers from Nick and Barbara will be used below to reflect the different attitudes the parents hold. Barbara’s answers are much shorter due to these being completed on an initial online questionnaire.

Nick said they have two children, both boys, who find sitting still in a classroom environment difficult at times.

**Jane’s story** (Full interview transcript in Appendix 9 D)**:**

*When I think about kindergarten for me it’s about just building a foundation of enjoying learning and I don’t really mind what they learn at this age, and I suppose it’s more about that love for learning and love for one another.*

Jane has one child, a boy who was adopted by Jane and her partner. Jane is an expatriate from the UK who has moved to Hong Kong as an adult, after having lived there as a child, she travelled the world and rather than settling in the UK (her country of origin), Jane settled in Hong Kong as she felt it was familiar territory.

**Joanne’s story** (Full interview transcript in Appendix 9 G)**:**

*Well in general I have in the past believed that you know some children are orchids and some children are dandelions, I think I have dandelions for the most part, which is to say I think they could have been happy, and they could have thrived more or less in a handful of different kinds of institutions.*

Joanne has three children, a son who is 9 years old, and twin daughters who are 5 years old. Joanne emigrated from the USA two years ago to live in Hong Kong. Joanne has a female partner and highlights that they are a ‘two mum’ family.

**Carole’s story** (Full interview transcript in Appendix 9 E)**:**

*I just feel from an early year’s perspective it’s that social interaction that level of communication I would much rather know that my children can socially interact and engage with adults and with children, than you know literally socially isolate themselves because they're very academic.*

Carole has two children, both boys, aged 3.5 years, and 12 months old. Carole is a teacher and has a domestic helper at home (in Hong Kong families often employ a domestic helper, who lives with them and who undertakes household tasks as well as looks after the children when parents are at work). Carole is English and her partner is African, so the children have mixed heritage and cultures at home.

**Christine’s story** (Full interview transcript in Appendix 9 F)**:**

*We visited a few kindergartens but chose the one based on the environment it is located in, it is literally located in a park, so it is bright and has lots of natural light/fresh air and also based on my son’s response with the venue***.**

Christine chose her son’s kindergarten, after seeing his reaction to the setting.

Christine is a single parent and has a 2-year-old child, she was born and raised in Hong Kong and has an Asian Hong Kong cultural background. Christine initially wanted to take part in the interview but had time issues so answered some questions via email, this did mean that there was not as much rich data as the other participants had been able to share.

# 4.7.2 Themes discussed by the parent participants.

All the themes as discussed by the parents during the interviews have an impact on the choices they have made for their children and start to give an insight into the reasons for their choice, and whether these choices were influenced by academic, cultural, or personal values, or a combination. The themes are discussed further in the following sections.

# 4.7.2 a Chinese language and culture.

The different experiences the parents have had and the different backgrounds they have come from can point to the discourse of different educational values. In Hong Kong, educational settings concentrate on notions such as emotional self-discipline, self-control, and preserving interpersonal harmony (Shea, Yang and Leong, 2010). These can differ from western cultural viewpoints and beliefs, where independence and assertiveness are highlighted as desired end goals of child development by the DfE (2019), although as previously discussed (1.5) these are disputed by other authors (Pilcher, 2022; Gaunt, 2022) who argue that it is more important that children are kept health and safe and learn and develop well.

For Esther (Appendix 9 B) and her husband, it was important that the children learned the Chinese language as well as the customs and culture. Esther highlighted that the system in Hong Kong is very different from the UK.

*It's very academically driven here in HK, and we wanted a kindergarten that was going to set our children up as well-rounded individuals, so not too pushy but also not too airy fairy as well so have a chance of getting to a good school.*

Esther further highlights that as parents they want their children to have a play-based start and to be *‘well rounded’,* she also acknowledges that because the Hong Kong system is different from the UK, that to have a chance to gain a place in a good school is also very important.

*In order to survive Hong Kong and in order to survive the education system here in HK, realistically if we want our children to get into a good school and give them a good foundation and backing with their Chinese language and mathematics and everything else, we have to sort of come to that compromise.* [Here Esther is referring to having a kindergarten with a more academic approach than they wanted]

Here the feeling of wanting to give their child a play-based start in their educational journey, is hampered by the notion that culturally academia appears to be a stronger need. Parents are often driven by conventional Confucian morals (1.6), whereby academic achievement and teacher directed education is preferred (Yuen and Greishaber, 2009, Wong and Rao, 2015). Esther reported that she felt more driven by the pragmatic realisation of the circumstances of the education systems in Hong Kong and the need to be practical in the sense of setting her own ideals and values aside to ensure their children have a ‘well rounded’ education, by which she meant that she had to make choices for her children which may not have aligned with her own personal values.

Christine highlighted (Appendix 9F) how educational values are linked to cultural values and religion, Christine said:

*I want my kid to learn humanitarian values and yes, it is linked to maintaining our cultural values, which we have learnt from our childhood especially through our religion where we were exposed to the ideology of philosophies of life, moral values, etc. from a very young age. Exposing our kid to humanitarian values will be much appreciated in our culture too.*

Here we can start to see some cultural and language values that parents like Esther and Christine highlighted in their interviews.

# 4.7.2 b Academic approaches.

The cultural aspects of winning at the starting line (Ren and Edwards, 2017) has had an influence on how some parents see the choices they had to make for their children (1.7). By choosing what they deem the ‘right’ setting, Esther believes she has set her child up for the future educational journey, even though she also highlights the importance of play and creativity as well as other values.

Esther (9B) further says that the right kindergarten:

*Will set them up for a good grounding, for a better school, for better prospects really, giving your child the right opportunity for the right footing into the right Kindergarten, into the right primary and into the right secondary school you give them more chance to succeed. It ensures that the kids get the values and things we want at home as well as school.*

Lubienski (2008) is one of a few scholars who highlights the reasons why parents should be able to make choices of pre-primary and primary education for their child (1.7). Lubienski (2008) discusses the notion that parents know the strengths and weaknesses of their child, as well as that the families want to reinforce their values which they practise at home in their children whilst they are in an educational setting. So, by choosing the right kindergarten according to the parents (in this case Esther 9B and Nick 9C), as they know their children and their characters, they have a better chance at gaining access to the right secondary school in the future.

On choosing a kindergarten for his children Nick (9 C) says:

*Basically, it is down to the school background, we go through various ways of research, for example the background of the school as well as some information provided by the parents, and we also choose what the philosophy of the school looks like. We are choosing a school which has more activities rather than being academic.*

Barbara, Nick’s wife on the other hand said she chose the kindergarten for its: *Academic purpose*. It is clear from this first encounter that both parents looked for different values in the early years setting. What is not clear is if they realised this themselves during the search for a kindergarten for their children.

Therefore, we can deduce that for Barbara the academic side was important but for Nick, it was important that their children were able to take part in activities rather than have a focus on the academic side of the kindergarten education. To underpin this, Nick states*:*

*My expectation nowadays is as the time goes they know how to write words, they know how to say in Chinese or English or whatsoever, so I expect the school we choose for them is mainly more interactive with person, like more activity, more interaction between people, they need to learn some social skills at the early stage of their life, I think that is more important than academic.*

Barbara said that she wanted her children to gain:

*Academic and self-confident skills as well as personal values.*

This shows that as parents they look at the same aspects overall. Barbara further adds she wants *a happy learning environment* for their children.

Jane (9 D) sent her child to the same kindergarten she attended as a child. It has a primary school linked to it and she choose the kindergarten because:

*I like the fact that not many people have a sort of international upbringing and send their children to the same school so there is definitely that kind of heritage aspect of it. But also having good memories, I remember quite a bit going there and so yeah that was a big part of it as well and also still really like the school itself.*

This can be seen as looking for a familiar setting, which Jane has memories of as well as looking for likeminded people who have also travelled or are not originally from Hong Kong. Heng (2017:38) discusses this as having a ‘fluid identity’ as many Hong Kong citizens are from a wide range of international, economic, and educational backgrounds (2.7).

When asked if Jane thinks the academic side of education is important at this stage, she says:

*They* [Teachers] *do actually, we had a parent teacher conference today, they said he does need to focus more on academics, and I was like what do you mean academic? Yeah they specifically were talking about phonics, numbers and art, that kind of thing.*

Jane highlights that there are other aspects she feels are more important at this stage of the educational journey rather than academic aspects.

*I think there is other things more important, but at the same time I’m not worried about it because he is still young, I can see that he knows all his letters, I don’t think he is behind or anything, so maybe I would be more worried about it if I didn’t see that he really was growing in that area.*

Jane further discusses that feeling safe and having teachers who understand are more important characteristics, but Jane also highlights at a later stage that the academic side has become the dominant aspect of education in Hong Kong.

*I get the feeling that that* [competitive academic aspects] *is the prevailing culture, for sure, you need to choose your right playgroup to get to your right kindergarten to get to your right primary school so you can go to Harvard or something and I think that is a really prevailing culture.*

A focus on academic performance and attainment is very prominent in Confucian based East Asian education (2.8.1.1) (Baumann, Hamin, and Yang, 2016). The previous education system in Hong Kong, placed heavy emphasis on examinations and had a strong competitive nature (Biggs, 1992; Education Commission, 2000).

Wong and Rao (2015) further highlight that:

Elitism is socially and culturally encouraged, and education is perceived as a means for upward social mobility. The emphasis on education and competition is further intensified by the Confucian belief that success can be achieved through the exertion of effort regardless of innate ability.

(Wong and Rao, 2015:2).

The choice Joanne and her partner made for their children, was linked to their previous experiences of educational settings. Although she says it wasn’t part of the decision making, there was an influence of their American background and knowledge of learning systems. Here we can see an example of a cultural aspect with an American background rather than a Confucian influence. The heritage and upbringing of Joanne and her partner influence the way they see the education system and therefore although she says it was not important that the school had an American inspired curriculum, they were drawn to a system they understood, Joanne shares:

*It’s an independent, private, international school, they have an American curriculum, which wasn’t necessarily a priority for us, but they have it. English is the language structure; they do a lot of like hands on and art and there is not a lot of pressure on the kids to read although they are certainly learning to read and that kind of thing. They also have an inclusion model when it comes to academic ability and that is really…I mean our kids as of now don’t need services of any kind and we don’t anticipate that they will, but we really like that model.*

Christine (9 F) also points out that she doesn’t expect much academically at this young age as she says, ‘*each kid is different’* but she does believe it is important to learn ‘*Maths and Science’,* as she says that gaining these will help in the competitive market at an older age.

Christine doesn’t believe that being in a kindergarten had a lot of impact on future learning, other than maybe a social impact as she says*:*

*I don’t think this affects much as we believe free learning up to age 6 at least. But enrolling the child in any kindergarten would give them some new exposure outside home/playground.*

However, this opposes her earlier answer where she highlighted wanting her child to learn maths and science as it is important for his future. She does however acknowledge that new experiences are gained in the setting.

This section has highlighted that parents acknowledge the cultural aspects of academia, and the importance attached to this within Hong Kong. For the future of their children, parents reported that they feel it is important that their children attend a kindergarten which has links to the ‘right’ primary and secondary schools, by which they mean that the schools have a good link to the next academic stage in their child’s life. Parents however also highlight that they believe that there are other aspects which are important at this stage for example the heritage aspect (Jane and Joanne), being self-confident (Barbara), wider social skills, activities (Nick) some wider exposure to other children (Christine).

# 4.7.2 c Choice of kindergarten.

Hong Kong has a vast variety of options regarding kindergartens. All these kindergartens are privately funded, and this gives parents much scope to make personal choices for their child (1.6). Close to a 100% of children in the age group of three to six years old attend a kindergarten for some or all the days (Wong and Rao, 2015). Parents discuss reasons of choosing a specific or nonspecific kindergarten. When discussing that the kindergarten is not compulsory, Carole (9 E) said:

*You know the system in Hong Kong it's not compulsory but realistically knowing he'd be going five days a week into a K 1 classroom we wanted really to expose into a little bit more obviously classroom based learning as well and being left independently the setting where he is now is actually where I teach so obviously that's probably that's why I'm saying I'm also a teacher that's probably got something to do with the reason for the choice as well.*

Carole highlights that the choice of kindergarten was made in relation to where her work address was situated as well as working as a teacher rather than looking at a variety of settings for her child. She also highlights that prior to this setting, her child went to a Reggio inspired kindergarten (as he attended two places during the same period). Hong Kong hosts many kindergartens which have links to a variety of approaches such as Te Whariki (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017) Reggio Emilia (Edwards et al., 2012), and High Scope (Holt, 2007) and these kindergartens interpret the curriculum and pedagogical approach including these approaches, hence the ‘inspired by’ notion (Chen et al., 2017, Yang and Li, 2019). Carole says:

*Basically Reggio style where he was and that's the reason I chose that is because it's literally true inquiry based learning, whole Hong Kong is a huge city it's obviously very built up and I really wanted him to be exposed to that natural environment bringing the nature inside as much as possible so that's the reason for choosing and where he went for play group and then obviously again with where we are now.*

So outdoor learning, inquiry-based learning and the natural environment are all aspects Carole highlights as important for her child. Carole further discusses that just sitting still in a classroom would not benefit her child and that the setting is very focussed in play-based learning as it is an international school which has an inquiry-based philosophy.

Here we can see that the government changes made in 2017 when they re-introduced a child centred approach delivered through a play-based approach (1.4) (Cheng et al., 2015) have filtered through to some of the kindergartens although there is a concern that not all kindergartens adhere to this approach.

When asked how Joanne choose the kindergarten for her children she said:

*We were sort of trying to manage* [the commute and finding a house] *and we were looking for like a good school that in theory could take all of our children that we could afford and that kind of meant that our geographical need and that combined with our broader family values, and then that actually ended up being a pretty small number of schools.*

Joanne (9 G) clearly shares that the needs for work meant that they had to live in a certain geographical area in Hong Kong, which then impacted on which schools were an option for them and their children. Joanne visited two kindergartens which were attached to primary schools as she also had to choose for her older child.

*We wanted something that would meet their needs and ideally where our son could go to elementary as well, so we were navigating one system instead of two (yeah) and there aren’t a ton of those.*

This pragmatic aspect of a family trying to navigate the needs between work, living and education spaces highlights the impact it can have on travel times to a specific kindergarten and school (Bourne and Shackleton, 2017). So, parents also make choices for practical reasons which fit into their daily lives.

Christine (9 F) was the only parent who let her son choose the kindergarten, as she watched her son’s response to the kindergartens they visited, and this one appeared to make him happier. The other interviewed parents made the decision for their children, and when asked if the child had been given the opportunity to have a voice in this choice of kindergarten all other parents said they had chosen for their child.

Jane (9 D) has chosen the kindergarten for different reasons and highlights personal values which she believes are more important when choosing a kindergarten.

*I think people have chosen the school* [where the child attends] *because of the values, more than the academic, and maybe people at primary school stage will choose a different one. But my child is actually adopted so I think I have a much more trauma informed mindset so I’m not super worried about academics as I can see there is so much more important things like feeling safe, feeling like the teachers understand, which the school are actually quite intentional about being trauma informed, which I think is quite unique.*

In this section all the parents highlight their own and their children’s needs and although academic reasons do play a part, parents mention other motives more such as needing an inquiry based, play-based curriculum (EDB, 2016), parental needs in regards, commuting, funding, needing their child to feel safe, all had a part in the choices which were made for the children. The previous PEVS funding scheme (1.6) will have supported some parents but also restricted choices for other parents as commuting would have been impacted and the choices to have a kindergarten near their home or work would have been influenced by the options, they had regarding which kindergarten accepted the PEVS.

# 4.7.2 d Multicultural inclusivity and acceptance.

Hong Kong is made up from a wide array of transnational, financial, and educational backgrounds (2.7). Traditionally Hong Kong has seen migrants from all over the world and this has led to cross cultural perceptions within the individuals as well as some inaccurate awareness of cultural value differentiations, such as the values in relation to academic attainment (Shengtao Wu, 2019). This influx of internationalisation has had an impact on multicultural identities but perhaps also influenced some biases and prejudices from certain groups of residents as well as the need for wider multicultural acceptances and wider understanding of different needs. The parents highlighted some of these.

Esther (9 B), discussed that some schools and kindergartens could be prejudiced against newcomers and says:

*Some local kindergartens have been known to be quite prejudiced against say if you are a foreigner and you are looking to take on the Chinese language, they are like, ‘well you don’t even speak Chinese so why would I even give you a chance, we don’t have the kind of manpower to support you’ kind of thing.*

Li (2004) and Louie (2001) discuss the lack of speaking the Chinese language in relation to Knowledge (2.8.11) as one of the Confucian principles, and the pressures and expectations of high academic achievement.

The EDB (2019) has set up Education services for non-Chinese speaking students, as it has been widely accepted within Hong Kong that this is an issue for minority groups. According to Wong Tsui-Kai (2020), ethnic minority groups have high aspirations for career and education, but the lack of Chinese language impedes them in their journey, and this is often followed by Chinese employers not wanting non-Chinese speaking employees. It is therefore causing some divide between Chinese speaking people and non-Chinese speaking people as this limits them in the job market at a later stage in their lives.

Jane (9 D) further discusses the importance of a diverse society and of immersing her child into a wider multicultural society.

*I think definitely being in a diverse and multicultural environment is really important and there definitely are some kindergartens in HK that is like majority 80 % white kids, and I wouldn’t,…. I would be quite intentional in not putting my child in an environment where it’s just not diverse I think this is important to me because, well partly because my child is Chinese but partly because it’s something I really valued.*

Parental cultural and personal values get passed on to the children (Goodnow, 2002), Jane clearly shows her value of wanting her children to experience a multicultural and global approach. Cherry (2022: NP, online) highlights this: ‘we develop our values and beliefs through our interactions within social groups or by participating in cultural events’. This resonates with Velez-Agosto, et al., (2017), Bio Ecological approach of culture having an immediate impact on the development of the child.

Carole (9 E) also highlights the importance in being ‘internationally minded’, whereby she discusses the importance of having children from different backgrounds in the school where her son goes. Carole indicates that this has created a third culture set of children as they gain values from parents, grandparents as well as being together with peers of so many different nationalities who all bring their own set of values and cultural beliefs.

*But I also think like culturally, like realistically my son is a third culture kid, so you know obviously I think moving forward it would be lovely to think that actually there's a little bit more of an international mindedness perspective and that its valued, but I think to really highlight that a little bit more coz you can walk into like my son's class there at least 12 different nationalities.*

This quote by Carole highlights again that many Hong Kong citizens are from a wide range of international, economic, and educational backgrounds (2.7).

Carole further highlights that it is good for children to have the opportunity to have their own heritage language, and their own values celebrated, this resonates the comments Esther (9 B) made about being bilingual and the value of their heritage (Packzia, 2023).

*My son he's mixed coz his daddy's African and I'm western, so again he is a child of different cultures as well, so I think to be able to value that and from the mother tongue perspective as well, I think to really give children the opportunity to communicate more in their mother tongue as well, like trying cluster a group of specific nationalities together, we would really value that even more.*

Joanne (9 G), follows this with comments about their family values for how their children learn and what they learn:

*My partner is a woman so we are a two mum family and we really wanted to make sure that we were in a school where our kids would feel good about who they are and who their family is and we also have in general like, I guess a more what I call a progressive educational philosophy, we are hoping for more hands on learning and less rote memorisation and fewer worksheets and more creative play and that kind of stuff.*

Joanne further says she feels that most kindergartens state that they have an inclusion model but that their practice does not support that and that at times the children are ranked by ability from an early age, to stream them academically rather than supporting them with their needs.

Joanne’s take on the inclusivity of educational settings can be linked back to the notion of interviews whereby the educational setting decides if the child and the family will fit into their systems, (Tse, 2020; Benny, 2023).

Parents highlight the need for kindergartens and schools to be inclusive and to practise acceptance (Benny, 2023), they focus on aspects such as their children being able to speak their own mother tongue as well as being able and supported to learn the language of the country (Packzia, 2023).The generational transmission of the socio-cultural aspect of learning their own mother tongue as well as the language of the country can be seen to be important here (Wertsch, 2009). As well as the need for a wider multicultural approach in the kindergartens and inclusivity which was highlighted by most parents, and this can be in regard of cultural background, language, or sexuality. Parents want their children to feel accepted within the settings their children attend (Lam, 2018; Tse, 2020).

# 4.7.2 e Curriculum and kindergarten interviews.

The previous section reported Joanne’s mention of children often being streamed into a certain direction depending on their educational ability at a young age. The EDB (2016, 2019) set guidance (1.6), in regards the curriculum for the kindergartens; however, as all kindergartens are privately owned, they do devise how they deliver the curriculum to their own specification. Parents have vocalised their opinions concerning the setup of the EDB guidelines and discuss individual experiences.

Esther (9 B) discusses an aspect which she feels needs addressing in the kindergarten curriculum*:*

Esther: *if you look at the early years curriculum they are very pretty on paper but it’s very vague very wishy washy and you know it is very unlike the EYFS in the UK where you have a set of standards to tick off, what they have covered etc, here it’s just like a general document and because of the level of competition, here kindergartens are, especially private ones, they have free rein as to how much they want to push children, you have got 4- 5 year olds probably writing in paragraphs, reciting this that and the other.*

Esther feels that there is a heavy emphasis on the free rein of the curriculum (EDB, 2019), and the academic aspects of it and how the curriculum guidance is interpreted by the different kindergartens.

The guidance from the Education Bureau (2019) states:

Create a stimulating learning environment that facilitates children’s development of multiple intelligences. Through life experiences, sensory encounters, exploration, and interesting games, children’s holistic development can be fostered.

(Education Bureau, 2019 online; guide to pre-primary curriculum).

Joanne (9 G), thought that academic aspects are less important, she said:

*It’s* [academia] *not so important in kindergarten for us, you know we have a lot of confidence that our kids will learn to read, and they will be curious about the things that they are curious about, and they will learn to count and all that kind of thing, I don’t know we are not that worried about it. I guess we chose a school that we didn’t think would hinder future prospects.*

To gain a place in a kindergarten in Hong Kong is at times very competitive. Esther (9 B), highlights this as she said they applied to 5 different kindergartens to gain a place, all with similar values for the children, which they liked.

*It is very competitive here as well, all children go through interview system and it’s really, really crazy compared to the UK system and also, we had a lot of preparation to do.*

Because all children in Hong Kong undergo some form of interview to ‘gauge their social, cognitive, and linguistic abilities’ (Davis, 2019:6; Tse 2020; Benny, 2023) before starting at a kindergarten, therefore parents often put their child’s name down for several kindergartens (1.7).

Esther highlighted different aspects throughout her interview such as her parental values for her children, including learning the local language and culture. She also highlights that prejudices against non-Chinese people are still in existence in Hong Kong and this makes it difficult at times for parents to make different choices for their child as there is still a strong sense that children need to achieve highly academically to be able to gain good employment at a later stage in their lives. Esther and her husband have had to make compromises to their values to ensure their children have a specific start in life at the kindergarten of choice and this could also indicate a shift in their values from specific personal ones to more academic values.

Nick (9 C) and his wife did not choose kindergartens in relation to a primary school, but Nick says that this will be important in the future.

*I think every parent in Hong Kong they really want to focus on choosing the school all the way through to secondary school as you know the chance is quite slim, you need to go through various stages of interviews, it’s all down to luck in some way since we cannot meet the teacher in person* [because of Covid restrictions], *so we can’t really show the children’s, I don’t feel it really show my kids talent in some way.*

Carole (9 E), says that her child had to have a visit before being accepted in the school as it is a kindergarten linked with the primary school, and that there was an interview procedure.

*You have to obviously have a play visit to be accepted into kindergarten and then there was also another interview procedure, the next year when he moved into K2, those boxes were ticked and now he doesn't have to have any form of additional interview.*

Carole further says that when she worked in a different international school previously and took her son there for an interview, she recounts this:

*They were proper interviews they were interviewing children of 18 months old, the children came in and there were three people observing you, they were observing me as the parent with my interaction to my son but they were obviously also observing his capabilities of you know letting go of mummy and going off and playing exploring it was realistically and observationally session it wasn't that they were going to be tested on whether they knew the alphabet or whether they could be there count up to 20.*

The competition is high in Hong Kong to get children into certain educational settings, Tse (2020) (1.7). Benny (2023: online.NP) highlights what educational settings look for in a child as well as their family, such as:‘a good attitude towards learning and families who will enhance the school community.’

Christine (9 F) highlighted that her son’s assessment was very play-based and that her son was observed by an assessor whilst he played, she did not feel that this was intrusive. This correlates with Benny (2023), who highlights that the interviews are informal and mostly based on observing the child as they undertake informal activities with the aim to:

‘See the children in action so they can assess their abilities and gain an insight into their proficiency and personality’ (Benny, 2023: online).

Benny (2023) further discusses that the interview process is merely to see if the child and the setting are a good fit and to establish whether the child has any wider needs, such as behavioural or other developmental needs. This approach to establishing the child’s needs and abilities would impact on the acceptance or refusal of the child into the setting (Davis, 2019, Benny, 2023), this could lead parents to ensure their child is highly prepared for the interview stage which often entails parents attending preparation sessions to ensure their two-year-old child can be accepted in a kindergarten of their choice (Lam, 2018). Tse (2020) highlights that there is fierce competition and that having interviews for kindergartens is a cultural aspect within Hong Kong.

In this section it is apparent that some parents believe the curriculum needs to be tighter, whereas other parents feel that this is not important but choose settings for different reasons such as wanting their child to grow in confidence and to be curious. It is however important to highlight that this was data from a small sample of parents, and I am not seeking to generalise the findings but merely am trying to reflect the experiences and views of these particular parents.

The interview system which is a common factor in Hong Kong kindergartens and primary schools is regarded by some parents as competitive and they have said that they feel they must do a lot of work with their child to give the correct impression of their abilities. Other parents said they felt it is a necessity but is not an intrusive formal interview but more an observational encounter with the child and parent.

# 4.7.2 f Social skills.

Whilst many parents in Hong Kong see choosing the correct school as an important route into better jobs for their children in the future (Fung, 2007; Fung and Lam, 2009), for Nick (9 C) and his wife the choice of kindergarten was based on the philosophy of the setting. They said they wanted more emphasis on social skills and for their children to become well-rounded people. Nick emphasises that education is life-long but that being a good person is something that needs to be instilled from a young age*:*

*I expect the school we choose for him really gives him a shot on more social skills, meet more people, more interactive. I prefer children grow to become a good person, if you ask me do we need an education in a good quality, yes, but if I got a choice, I prefer them to become a normal nice person instead.* *You know you got to be kind to each other as well as share things out, I think that is the very fundamental way to learn how to become a more sociable person.*

Esther highlights that she wants:

*Creative free play, the values of good manners, kindness, empathy, socialising, learning how to work as a team,* *mind your P’s and Q’s, respecting elders and learning how to empathise, helping the people who need the help the most.*

Here Nick and Esther touched upon the notion of some of the social skills such as: respect, politeness, and obedience. Jose, et al. (2000) discussed this as some of the collective values parents may have which are at times present in the Hong Kong culture.‘Collective values parents may have as a social parenting group could be the traits of ‘persistence, obedience, politeness, respect’ *(*Jose, et al., 2000: 688).Another aspect which can be seen here, and which Nick highlights are the social norms and expectations that the child shows ‘proper behaviour’ (Wang and Tamis-Le Monda, 2003) and the expectations of the parent and their own values and how they want their children to demonstrate these for example Nick says: being a normal nice person, and Esther says: *having good manners*. Nick further reiterates the importance of becoming self-confident and learning from mistakes:

*Self-confident is, you need to learn how to do things right in order to gain your confidence, if you see those teenagers for example they lack self-confidence because they cannot suffer the failure, I prefer my kids to learn from their mistakes.*

Joanne (9 G) discusses the resilience she feels her children have and that she wants them to form long term friendships and social interactions and finding joy in learning. Joanne also acknowledges that not every school would have welcomed a ‘*two-mum*’ family and shows that she would have been unsure if a different school would have given them the opportunity to thrive as parents.

*Well in general I have in the past believed that you know some children are orchids and some children are dandelions, I think I have dandelions for the most part, which is to say I think they could have been happy and they could have thrived more or less in a handful of different kinds of institutions, whether or not my partner and I would have thrived as parents in those institutions is another question. So, I hope that they have fun memories of their teachers, hope that they make friends, that they can carry with them, I hope that they go excited into first grade.*

Here we see a viewpoint of the social aspect of the setting which is important for the parents. To be accepted for who they are rather than focussing on the academic attributes for their children, Joanne feels it’s very important that there is wider acceptance for family structures. Jane further feels it is important that her child learns to interact and share friendships, she further says:

*I think there is more important things* [rather than academia], *just being kind to each other and learning how to be thankful, learn early public speaking skills, so getting them in front of a class to explain something and just developing that confidence.*

There are some clear values in this, other than academic motivations, when Jane highlights kindness, social interaction, confidence building, and public speaking.

Jane (9 D) discusses that curiosity is important as she wants her son to learn through interactive viewpoints, hence why the outdoor area was important, she further highlights that she takes her son to outdoor areas every week. Curiosity can be linked to the Confucian principle of Knowledge, this is said to be gained through motivation, diligence and persistence, curiosity can be a sign of these (Luo, et al., 2013).

In the parent interviews, we can see some Confucian principles, even if parents don’t consciously say this, some Confucian principles such as a harmonious relationship, which according to Confucian principles is a combined effect between benevolence, respectability, morality and sincerity. These combined values enable people to uphold good relationships and understand various perceptions as well as being liked by others (Chen and McCollum 2000; McCollum and Chen 2001). These can also be attributed to other values and beliefs which are more worldwide, and as values and beliefs run through all the participants’ lives as a fine thread, it is impossible to say if these are specifically Confucian or western beliefs.

# 4.7.2 g Observations by parents.

In addition to those themes such as Language and culture, academic approaches, choice of kindergarten, multicultural inclusivity and acceptance, impact of curriculum and kindergarten interviews, social skills discussed in previous sections, parent participants also discussed some other topics which impacted on their choice for their child's education. These include an enjoyment for learning, being inquisitive as well as a safe environment, parents further mention play, and social interaction as important. Whilst these are the outliers, they nonetheless offer interesting insights into how parents perceive the education system in Hong Kong and what they really want for their children.

Jane (9 D) visited several kindergartens before deciding on the one she chose but said that her mind was already made up. She further highlights foundations for learning as an important criterion. Jane says:

*I think when I think about kindergarten for me it’s about just building a foundation of enjoying learning and I don’t really mind what they learn at this age and I suppose it’s more about that love for learning and love for one another , the kindergarten he goes…..the curriculum they use also has some kind of core values and they tell you each week , this week we are learning about resilience, or this week we are learning about…..things I would not necessarily think that 4 year olds would pick up on but they don’t dumb it down for them, I think I like that and I think that, just feeling that they are in a safe environment where they can explore, so they have quite a lot of free play when they first arrive, usually for at least 20 minutes, where they can get something themselves and play with it, play with other kids play with teachers and there is an outdoor playground as well and a little garden and that is not a given in Hong Kong.*

So being in a safe environment, to gain a love for learning and being inquisitive as well as having clear guidance on what is being taught that week is important for Jane.

The position of values and value education has been stressed in various international and national documents which relate to or regulate the specialism and area of education (OECD, 2012; UNESCO, 2014). In Hong Kong, the EDB (2000) states that the curriculum should:

Provide students with a school curriculum which enables them to construct knowledge and develop a global outlook to cope with the changing and interdependent world in the 21st century. (EDB, Curriculum: 2000, online)

And although this does not specify certain values it does highlight that children need to be able to have a global outlook, which can be interpreted as including wider value systems.

Carole (9 E), further highlights that for her it is important that her son can play and have social interactions which he has missed during the Covid period**.** She further believes that having a passion for things is more important than academia.

*Literally for them to have a passion, a passion for going to school, or passion for learning, a passion for being sociable interactive and really engaging with others that to me is of vital importance…… (and that) there's a good community there's a good feel.*

Carole shows that she perceives the cultural values in regarding the Hong Kong approach to education differs from the western attitudes by saying:

*I think again it's a lot about you know Hong Kong itself, it's the title of the school, the organisation that's what a lot of the additional places are down too, and I think you know academic, yes of course it's of vital importance and culturally obviously I know that is a strong belief, but then also now I think there's a lot of parents who have had the opportunity, like local parents I'm talking about now, have had the opportunity themselves they've gone to University or maybe they went to boarding school at the age of 16 or something so they really also saw the difference themselves even though they were sent to a highfalutin* [pretentious] *boarding school in a foreign country it was still very different it wasn't as didactic as what they are used to here.*

Carole believes if local people have been able to see a different international education from the Chinese and Hong Kong inspired attitudes, then they will be more likely to embrace play-based learning (Curriculum Development Council, 2017), if teachers are not ‘*true believers’* in play-based education at a young age, then she says kindergartens only use it to sell their kindergarten to parents:

*Whereas I think if they're not true believers in like Early Childhood Education then obviously yes their selling points are talking Hong Kong now they sell that their very play-based in enquiry based but actually you know that when you see it you know you go on a school tour and you see a class of 4 year olds or even three year old sitting down Doing worksheets and you think that that's obviously it's not truly what they value.*

Here we can see a disconnect with the government advising play-based learning (EDB, 2016; Curriculum Development Council, 2017), and teachers saying they incorporate a play-based learning approach in their setting. According to Carole, maybe not understanding what play-based learning means in reality. There appears to be an educational disconnect between the traditional Confucian and the western approaches (1.4) (Lau, 2012).

The impact migrant domestic workers could have on the family was mentioned by Carole.

Migrant domestic workers make up about 10% of the working population in Hong Kong and one in eight households in Hong Kong employ a domestic worker, also known as ‘helper’, to support them with childcare and domestic tasks. Most of these workers have little education and are mostly from countries such as the Philippines and Indonesia (Kuo, 2014). Many such workers have had limited education and speak little English or Mandarin which can have an impact on their ability to support the language and communication development of the children they look after (Dulay et al., 2016). Part of the role of the domestic workers is to take the young children to the kindergarten or playgroup, where they stay with the child and interact and play with the child, or to look after them in the home when parents are at work. Carole says regarding a ‘*helper’:*

*So obviously our helper took him originally before* [before aged 2 when children attend playgroup with an adult present to keep them safe] *then he became old enough like at the age of two he was old enough to be left obviously independently* [ in the care of the kindergarten] *and that was twice a week, so we started from twice a week to full time.*

Carole further highlights that it was very different as due to Covid children were taught at home. She did however highlight that it is not the helper’s role to deliver education to their children. Covid-19 restrictions, such as staying at home and school closures came into effect in Hong Kong during their first wave of the Covid pandemic in January 2020 (Cheung, 2020).

*I can see both sides because you know, I'm delivering to my own class so I know what it's like and I understand also from the parent perspective, yes we're very fortunate in the majority to have helpers but realistically I don't feel it's our helpers role to be delivering and supporting the children, I feel it should be my role as a parent.*

This section of the chapter has shared the values of the interviewed parents, I first discussed structural discourses of the interviewed parents and reiterated detail of the participants in this study. The chapter then shared the cultural legacies linked to the Zodiac calendar, as a suitable background for the study. The narrative of the parents indicated, just as the narrative of the animals in the zodiac calendar story, the various struggles as well as values the parents and teachers present. The voices of the participants were represented, and this was reflected in the illustrative stories of the parents and the wider narrative and topics the parents shared. To give this more clarity, a section on the anonymised parental background was included whereby the voices of the parents and their background were shared. Parents discussed, Language and culture, academic approaches, choice of kindergarten, multicultural inclusivity and acceptance, impact of curriculum and kindergarten interviews and social skills. These initial themes discussed by the parents who were interviewed were shared within this chapter which were considered using Braun and Clarke’s (2022) thematic approach.

The next chapter will use the themes discussed in chapter 4, as a starting point to wider themes and start to investigate possible relationships between the data gathered from the three data sets; Parent questionnaires, Teacher questionnaires and Parent interviews, and these will be considered for the themes in the next chapter.

# Chapter 5: Consideration of themes.

Throughout this research, the following research questions were posed and formulated in this study and are reinstated below to present the findings as well as link to the themes which emerged throughout this Thesis:

* What are parental values in general, and in specific in Hong Kong?
* Which aspects (economic, political, global) may impact on these values?
* What are the values teachers in early years settings hold in Hong Kong?
* Do the values of parents and teachers match up with each other or is there a chasm between them?

Based on the data from my study the following sections will clarify if answers have been found in regards the sub questions and therefore have given some insight into the main research question which was posed as follows: **‘*How do parental values associated with academic achievement, influence the choice parents make for early childhood provision for their children in Hong Kong?’***

First the themes which arose from the research will be discussed and this is followed by a discussion of the sub questions in sections 5.6.1 to 5.6.4.

# 5.1 Key themes.

This chapter first moves into the consideration of the Key themes which have arisen from the parental interviews as well as the combined teacher and parent questionnaires in relation to the literature explored in *chapter 1 Introduction and chapter 2 Literature review.* This was achieved through initial thematic analysis, as explained in chapter 3 whereby I engaged with Braun and Clarke’s (2022) theories to familiarise myself with the data and to conclude the themes within this study. These themes were then reflected upon, using historical, political and practical focussed literature, as a lens to view and analyse the findings in relation to the main research question: *How do parental values associated with academic achievement, influence the choice parents make for early childhood provision for their children in Hong Kong.* The themes which emerged are discussed as follows: Academic values (5.1), Curriculum in the kindergarten (5.2), Cultural and Heritage values 5.3), Social and Personal Skills (5.4) and there was one minority theme (5.5) which I felt was important to highlight, and this was the practice of the value of play. The chapter then includes a wider discussion (5.6) which highlights the sub questions which were posed at the start of the thesis. The chapter then concludes with a summary (5.7).

The initial analysis using Braun and Clarkes thematic approach (2022), of the interviews has shown the themes which were highlighted through a colour coding system (appendix 9 A) and were discussed in the previous chapter. Throughout the analysis of the gathered data, I engaged with Braun and Clarke’s (2022) thematic approach (3.12), whereby the themes were found by looking for meaningful patterns within the research data sets. Using Braun and Clarke’s (2022) approach to thematic analysis enabled me to familiarise myself with the data. This approach revealed different values as well as similar discussion points which show some views of shared and individual values parents and teachers believe in.

The capturing of the responses from the teachers’ and parents’ questionnaires in this study supports the thematic analysis by highlighting the distinctions in replies, not only in the varying values highlighted, but also the responses from the different participants. This may be a reflection on their job role as a teacher or their role as a parent. In evaluating and scrutinising the responses to each of the questions in the teachers’ questionnaires and again in the parents’ questionnaires, wider themes emerged.

When focussing on the content, commonalities in the findings appeared which highlighted values in relation to the following themes: academic values, curriculum, cultural values, social values, and one minority theme. These values emerged organically from the discussions as highlighted by the different groups of participants, to deliberate further in the themes in this section. Braun and Clarke (2022: NP) stated that a theme is: ‘an idea or concept that captures and summarises the core point of a coherent and meaningful pattern in the data.’ Braun and Clarke (2022: NP) further highlighted that a theme consists of a frequent repeating pattern within the data, which shows a theory or idea which is organised around a central concept. I have used this concept to draw together some of the wider themes into some coherent amalgamation of topics discussed in the next sections.

To delve into the themes more efficiently involved looking at the data which previously had been looked at horizontally, question by question, to the reviewing it in a more vertical manner by looking at participant by participant. To support this analysis, the data was imported into an Excel sheet which gave a clearer overview of the answers given by the teachers and the parents. The voices of the participants of all three data sets (Parent questionnaires, Teacher questionnaires and Parent interviews) will be included in this section and specific quotes have been selected to share the voices of the participants on the varying themes. These findings are then linked to existing literature to gain deeper understanding of the themes as they arose. Below in box 4 I have included an overview of the participants and how they are indicated within the text.

Box 4. Overview of participants and how they are indicated in the next section.

Questionnaire Teacher participants are indicated by initially participant, then by P 1, P 2, P 3 etc their voices are displayed *in italic* within the text.

Questionnaire Parent participants are indicated as C (C for Carers, to distinguish them from the other participants) and the initial C 1, C 2, C 3 etc, their voices are displayed *in italic* within the text.

Interviews with Parents are indicated by names, these are pseudonyms to ensure anonymity, and their voice is displayed *in italic*.

The key themes, which were identified organically from the parent and teacher questionnaires as well as the findings from the parent interviews will be explored further in this chapter.

The overarching theme which was apparent in all three sets of data is academic values, which has underlying themes as can be seen in the visual representation below in figure 4.

Academic Values

Curriculum

Cultural values

Social and Personal skills

Minority theme of play

Figure 4. Key themes.

The main theme of academic approaches is underpinned by the wider themes which represent the value systems of the participants of all three data sets (teacher questionnaires, parent questionnaires and parent interviews). As previously discussed, the zodiac calendar (4.2), which has been used as a framework to show the link between cultural aspects and the changing narratives of the individuals as well as the collective participants, changes slightly every year. Values discussed by the participants of this study, may also move, and change over time depending on environmental, cultural, and social aspects the participant finds themselves in (Gouveia, 2015, Vygotsky, 1978, Bronfenbrenner 1979 and Velez-Agosto, et al. 2017).

The zodiac calendar shares that the sign someone is born under will have an influence on their personality and career choice as well as their compatibility with other zodiac signs (Gouveia, 2015). Here a comparison can be made with a value system, as a persons’ background, where they grew up and which values a person holds, will have an impact on their beliefs and morality and therefore their personality. It can also be deduced that depending on beliefs, there will be a compatibility to other people and kindergartens sharing those values.

After gathering all the data and using Braun and Clarke’s (2022) thematic approach, the collected data highlighted the following key themes, which will be explored in the next section. The first section (5.1) will explore the main theme of Academic values, followed by the underpinning themes which support the main theme. The underpinning themes are Curriculum (5.2) Cultural and Heritage values (5.3), Social and Personal skills (5.4) and Minority Themes (5.5), which has sub sections of Child interviews (5.5.1) and the Value of Play (5.5.2). All these different themes have an impact on how the main theme of academic values is perceived.

# 5.2 Academic values.

As previously discussed, (1.5), Hong Kong emphasises high quality education and academic achievement in the early childhood education sector (Jensen, 2013, Lee, 2014, Hogan, 2014). This reflects cultural expectations to accomplish educationally from a young age, and Lee, (2014) and Watkins and Biggs, (1996), have remarked that Hong Kong’s historically comparatively didactic education arrangement, is largely set up to ensure academic and examination success. The emphasis on performance is mirrored in early childhood education. Wong and Rao (2015:27) discuss the notion that:

ECE, which contributes to the future wellbeing of society by developing children’s later academic ability, making them more independent, more socially adept, and more self-confident.

This notion of academic ability is further highlighted to gain better job prospects in the future (2.6).

Ren and Edwards (2017) debate these phenomena in relation to ancient and modern China and consider that academic success has been viewed as a gateway to a prosperous career in the future and upward mobility. Watkins (2009) argues the perception that elitism is culturally and socially promoted, and this is related to the educational and academic achievement as an approach of increasing progress and success. Cheung (2009), Chua (2011) and Ren and Edwards (2017), also consider that Chinese parents have an expectation that kindergartens teach children ‘pre-academic skills’ (Ren and Edwards, 2017,1053), (reading maths, writing) as well as engaging with extracurricular activities, this extrinsic value is ‘to ensure their children do not fall behind at the starting line.’ (Ren and Edwards, 2017,1053).

Cheung, et al., (2022:959) however shared their research which revealed that: ‘pre-primary schoolteachers hold strong humanistic orientation beliefs while cognitive process/academic orientation beliefs are held less strongly.’

It is further highlighted in literature, that the beliefs held by teachers regarding education, such as pedagogical approaches, curriculum and assessments, have an impact on how they practise their teaching and how teachers influence children's development and learning (Leung, [2012](https://link-springer-com.hull.idm.oclc.org/article/10.1007/s10643-021-01211-3#ref-CR29); Walker, et al., [2012](https://link-springer-com.hull.idm.oclc.org/article/10.1007/s10643-021-01211-3#ref-CR37); Eren and Çetin, [2019](https://link-springer-com.hull.idm.oclc.org/article/10.1007/s10643-021-01211-3#ref-CR19)). With the changing curriculum and the play-based early childhood approach in Hong Kong (EDB, 2019), it is important to understand how teachers perceive these changes in the approach from academic didactic learning to a play-based approach. The perception of this new approach can vary from teacher to teacher, and this has not been documented in literature (McMullen, et al., [2005](https://link-springer-com.hull.idm.oclc.org/article/10.1007/s10643-021-01211-3#ref-CR31); Brownlee and Chak, [2007](https://link-springer-com.hull.idm.oclc.org/article/10.1007/s10643-021-01211-3#ref-CR8); Wong, [2019](https://link-springer-com.hull.idm.oclc.org/article/10.1007/s10643-021-01211-3#ref-CR40)).

In Hong Kong most three to six-year-old children attend early childhood (preschool or kindergarten) settings (Wong and Rao, 2015), however despite kindergarten education not being compulsory, close to 100% of children attend, indicating that parents in Hong Kong attach strong values to their children's kindergarten attendance (Audit Commission, 2013 and, Pre-Primary Education Voucher scheme (PEVS), online nd: np).  According to Wong and Rao, (2015) and Yuen and Greishaber, (2009), Hong Kong parents are habitually motivated by typical Confucian beliefs whereby academic success and more academic orientated, teacher led educational programmes are favoured. Some of the teacher questionnaires (Appendix 7.4 C) also highlighted the aspect of academic attainment, and they believed that this is what parents were looking for when choosing a kindergarten. The Teacher participants stated on the topic of academic aspects and what they believe parents want:

* L*earning attitudes, parents care about that, and they hope they can be nurtured when they study in kindergarten, so they can study well in Primary school* P 5.
* *Let children interest in learning, which can have positive heart in the academic subject, also good social development with other children.* P 3.
* *How to be a successful child, get full marks*’ P 58, ‘*Ambition* P 54’, ‘*result orientated* P 53.
* *I think most of them will choose school based on the goodwill of it and the percentage of graduated from kindergarten and entry to band one primary school. P 25.*
* *Yes* [ to the question if parents want academic attainment for their child] *because this can ensure their children can achieve what they (parents) want, also they can let children to be successful person in the future. P 3*
* *Yes, I think parents choose a particular kindergarten based on the values taught there, it is because some parents may have low education level so they believe that teachers who are educated can help to teach their children, so that their children can be a ‘good boy’ or ‘good girl’ in the future. P 51*

Examples given here show that some of the teachers believe that parents choose a kindergarten for the academic side and the progression to a better primary school.

During 2012 new educational policies were set within Hong Kong. New notions of child-centeredness and holistic development have since been disseminated (Pearson and Rao, 2012). These are new core values in early childhood education. Prior to these new policies and changes, the teaching methods used in Hong Kong had been associated with a didactic and highly structured methods which had long been the implemented traditional learning approach for early childhood education (NG and Rao, 2008).

In more recent years the Hong Kong Education Bureau has published updated guidance for all kindergartens (1.5). The parents or carers, indicated below as C, who completed the questionnaire (Appendix 8) stated on academic values and if they would choose a kindergarten for a specific reason:

* *Based on whether the teachers are passionate and caring for the kids; good partnership of both school and parents; the curriculum is well organised and good bridging to the primary school in HK; overall can get into good primary schools. C 1.*
* *Close to home, accepts Roman Catholic children, has bilingual class. C 4.*
* *English medium as my kids goes to an international school. C 8.*

Here we can start to see evidence of some western influences in the Hong Kong early education approaches and curriculum. Since these changes came into force teachers have had opportunity for more western training approaches such as studying towards an early childhood studies degrees, funded by the Hong Kong government, these have been delivered by western universities.

Overall, the teacher questionnaires showed that some participants highlighted that parents would choose a kindergarten linked to academic aspects. Even though they also mentioned other values in the questionnaires, their overarching view was that parents want a good academic education for their children. Remarkably when parents were asked the same question in the questionnaires, they highlighted some academic aspects but gave some very different answers, so the academic side was not as important as the teachers had thought. Parents during the interviews highlight that there are other aspects which are more important. This may have indicated that parents may focus on a more rounded set of aspirations and experiences for their children. Nick discusses that some children are not academic but are pushed into Doing extra work as previously highlighted by Lee, (2014) and Watkins and Biggs, (1996), Nick highlights that his children learn more by watching YouTube instead of getting extra lessons, he says he wants his children to be happy and therefore is not pushing the academic side at this stage. During his interview Nick told me that he was not good at academia but undertook lots of courses at a later age which now means he works as an IT engineer. Nick (Appendix 9 C) says:

*You know education wise; you can do education at 40 or 50, I’m still Doing some sort of courses, I really emphasis the point is education is endless, you always have your second shot at education but becoming a good person you only have one single chance in your life, but I am an IT engineer so I’m still in a scientific level of a career.*

Here we can see that from a personal parental experience, a parent who has grown up in Hong Kong and has a Chinese heritage has appreciated that there is always time to gain wider academic skills later in life.

Two teacher participants, who completed the questionnaire said that they felt parents should choose a kindergarten for reasons other than academic values:

* *I think parents should choose a particular kindergarten according to the values taught there, because academic level is not represented to everything. Those values such as confident, sharing… still important to their life journey.**P 4****.***
* *Every people have different values; people are easier to accept the same value. P 28****.***

So, if they go to a kindergarten which has certain values, according to these two teachers, then parents will feel that it is a better fit for their child.

The parent questionnaires also considered other aspects as well as academic values, and they highlighted various reasons for choosing a kindergarten, most of these reasons were not linked directly to academic success. Parents highlighted: community, location (proximity to home), curriculum, facilities, friendly and safe environment, kind, caring, loving teachers and staff, opportunities to play and learn other languages. Geneser (2017:45) states ‘Cognitively, play enables young brains to process information and, in fact supports academic progress.’ So although parents mentioned play unrelated to academia Geneser (2017) believes this to have a positive impact on academic aspects of learning.

Overarchingly the data gathered indicated that one key criterion for choice of kindergarten was the location of kindergarten (near home, or workplace for easy access) rather than academic aspects. Language learning was mentioned, but mainly the responses from parents in the questionnaires was that it was about the location, environment, and approaches to learning such as a happy learning environment and supportive teachers.

Here we can deduce that teachers had the perception that parents wanted an academic approach for their child, and some parents also held this view, saying that they wanted an academic approach from a kindergarten age. However, some parents voiced strong views which indicated that they valued other aspects within the kindergarten for their child, not mentioning academia as a first criterion. Enjoyment of learning and the environment being a safe space with supportive teachers comes through as more important for some parents than academic achievements.

This section has discussed academic values, and the importance parents and teachers attach to academia, the next section will discuss curriculum and how parents perceive the curriculum in the kindergartens.

# 5.3 Curriculum in the kindergarten.

The 2001 curriculum reform was put in place for all primary schools in Hong Kong, the reform set by the Curriculum Development Council (2001) issued the ‘Learning to Learn’ document which contained the changes to include an inquiry-based approach. This has impacted on teachers as they have had to alter their teaching practices in the classroom (Lee, 2000). This reform filtered through to the Early childhood education in kindergartens (Curriculum Development Council, 2006) and the new guidance from the Hong Kong Education Bureau shows that they highlight a need to consider children's interests, needs and abilities. As highlighted in 1.4, before this reform, private kindergartens had more freedom to include formal academics and homework and paying parents were the drivers for this situation where academic attainment appeared to have a higher status than other wider values.

The reverse of a more didactic traditional Confucian approach had now changed to the inclusion of an inquiry based learning approach, which would encourage the children to be more active and to engage with wider exploration of ideas and be given time to ask more questions (Lau, 2012:12).These represent a shift from a teacher-centred, to a child-centred approach (1.5.2), (EDB, 2016). During the parent interviews (4.6.2 e) Esther (Appendix 9 B) highlighted this topic, commenting that although there is a curriculum, *‘it is a bit vague’,* and kindergartens still mostly get a free rein on how they deliver the curriculum. The kindergartens in Hong Kong still offer a large variety of curriculum and developmental approaches and often they will claim to be a Montessori, Steiner, Reggio Emilia and High scope kindergarten, however most of those include elements of those approaches rather than following the ethos of those specific developmental approaches in full (Chen et al., 2017, Yang and Li, 2019).

Some parents highlighted that they wanted a kindergarten which had some aspects of inquiry-based learning, either directly or through inference.

They reported (Appendix 8) that they wanted the following in the setting for their child:

* *Because of project approach, C 3.*
* *Environment in which it is located (bright, open infrastructure) and based on recommendation, C 21.*
* *They have a supportive learning environment focused on play, curiosity, and the whole child, C 7.*
* *Montessori - practical life skills, problem solving skills, C 9.*
* *School distance from home, school environment (prefer more open with nature light), teacher quality and how they love children, C 18.*

One parent also highlighted they wanted ‘*the curriculum is well organised and good bridging to the primary school in HK; overall can get into good primary schools*’ another two did say they considered ‘*the curriculum*’ as part of their choice for the kindergarten for their child. Chloe says regarding the kindergarten her child attends that *‘the curriculum they use also has some kind of core values and they tell you each week’* this shows that values are part of the curriculum of that kindergarten*.* However as discussed by Lunn et al., (2017) the kindergartens could potentially have conflicting pedagogical practices and values from both educators and parental perceptions *.*  Four parents highlighted languages (English and Cantonese and languages as a general aspect). So, although there still is some perception, that parents want an academic approach delivered through the curriculum, parents reported that they also want a more inquiry-based approach, whereby the children are invited to explore the academic content by posing questions and being actively engaged in the learning process, rather than having a didactic approach to learning. The government guidelines (EDB ,2016) are supporting an inquiry-based approach. The parent questionnaire further showed some other values and influences which impacted on their choice of kindergarten such as, location of the kindergarten, the love for the children and the focus on looking after the whole child as well as a focus on play were mentioned.

Teachers reported (Appendix 7.4 C) that they believed parents wanted a variety of characteristics within a kindergarten for their children.

* *Let children interest in learning, that can have positive heart in the academic subject, also good social development with other children, P 3.*
* *in Hong Kong parents are more concern on the curriculum of academia, P 36.*
* *Parent will choose a kindergarten by their ranking, activities, and their teaching quality. Parents are more care the language development of their child, P 23.*
* *I think most of the parents are concerning the curriculum/activities through different teaching methods or materials. Therefore, it helps their children to participant into a good school*, P 8.

Teachers further highlighted that they believed that parents wanted their children to have a strong academic curriculum, as well as teachers who have high qualifications. Wong and Rao, (2020), highlighted the increase of teacher qualifications and the impact of these qualifications after the PEVS (1.8.1) were introduced. Teachers further reported that they believe parents choose a kindergarten for *their reputation* (P 13*)* of having *good academic achievement* (P 28) *and a good reputation as well as the teaching methods and a good curriculum* (P 8)and on what *they want their children to learn* (P 24). One teacher comments that they believe *the concern for parents is that different kindergartens have different core values, aims and a different curriculum* (P 25). Teachers also show that they believe parents want the kindergarten *to instil good values* (P 2*) such as: respect,* this is discussed by several teachers*, honesty (P 2), love (P 64) and personal and social skills,* which was highlighted throughout the questionnaires.

This section has shown that although the curriculum and teaching topics and practices are important for both parents and teachers, both sets of participants also understand that it is a combination of the curriculum and wider values which are important.

This section has reported some of the data as shared by the participants on the curriculum and values associated. The next section will discuss cultural and heritage values.

# 5.4 Cultural and heritage values.

Some of the data gathered showed some links to Confucian and Western cultures. Schwartz (2006:137) discusses cultural values as:

The rich complex of meanings, beliefs, practices, symbols, norms, and values prevalent among people in a society.

The complexity of these values, as highlighted above, are evident in Hong Kong where the evolution and adaptation of globalisation can be witnessed. As the research was undertaken in Hong Kong where Confucianism is still an underlying part of the society and the culture, I felt that this was an important aspect of the research. Another attribute which impacts on culture is the influx of people from the wider global economies which will have had an impact on how culture and values are seen by different groups of people. Further, Confucianism is still part of familial ethos within Hong Kong (Tu and Du, 1996; Bennett, 2021). Some families living in Hong Kong identify more with the Chinese Confucian ideology and traditions whilst also western traditions, with Confucian traditions being treated as a cultural resource that can be absorbed to achieve a personal economic goal (Tu and Du, 1996; Bennett, 2021).

Participant views on cultural influences showed a large variety of perspectives. All participants reported that their values were part of their everyday life, and they could not distinguish between general values or specific Confucian or westernised values (Inglehart and Baker, 2000). This may signify the interlinking of cultural Confucian and western values within the community or may denote an absence of understanding about specific Confucian or western values (Stern et al., 1995).

The ages of the parents and teachers may have had an influence on the initial findings as of the teachers who took part, 60 were in a twenties age bracket with a 6 teachers being in the thirties/forties age bracket. This could also be the case for parents who completed the questionnaires; however, their ages were not requested on the questionnaires which were completed anonymously online rather than in a classroom environment as were the teacher questionnaires.

Teacher participants did not report that they actively experienced that they had different values because of their culture or upbringing, as maybe they did not perceive, as Arslan (2018: NP) states, the underlying

‘Codes, oral, statue, and faith that serve as the figurative means of transformation of cultural morals amongst generations and this transfer of generational values’

happens without people knowingly accepting these values as new or different.

We can however see that teachers and parents highlight how culture is interwoven with daily lives of children and how this can be a generational or heritage set of values as all parents and teachers can be from a wider global background and therefore their own cultures and heritage from their personal family background will have an impact on their values.

Nick (Appendix 9 C) comments on the socio-cultural link of these generational values as he says he wants his children to: *be more interactive with people, then you learn things from them you need to give them opportunity to become someone who learn between right and wrong.*

Joanne (Appendix 9 G) further remarks: *I think we see a very different generation and we want to instil all those sort of values in our children that my parents and my husbands’ parents have put into us you know they are quite old school, you know mind your P’s and Q’s, respecting elders and learning how to empathise, helping the people who need the help the most.*

Christine (Appendix 9 F) shared*: I want my kid to learn humanitarian values and yes, it is linked to maintaining our cultural values, which we have learnt from our childhood especially through our religion where we were exposed to the ideology of philosophies of life, moral values, etc. from a very young age.*

Parents in the interviews highlighted that they felt culturally there were differences in the approaches to learning and the notion of achieving from a young age as well as the cultural difference in the approach of choosing an educational setting, as they felt that this had to be decided upon at the very start of the educational journey to ensure their children could compete as in ‘winning from the starting line’(Cheung, 2009; Chua, 2011). Esther highlighted (4.6.2) the academically driven discourse in Hong Kong and this was echoed by Barbara who emphasised that she wanted more academic approaches for her children and Jane (Appendix 9 D) who says: *Teachers said he does need to focus more on academics, I think there are other things more important.*

Overall, the perception appears to be that culture runs through Hong Kong as a fine thread which plays an important role in the choices made by parents for their child’s kindergarten and further educational journey. For some parents this means following the notion of choosing a kindergarten specific for its academic values and future educational journeys; as Barbara shares: *Academic and self-confident skills as well as personal values* are important to her, whilst for others this means that their own cultural upbringing has impacted the notion of wanting to ensure their child has a good set of values to start their journey with rather than a focus on academia, here Esther and Carole both show a focus on their children's cultural heritage as they both want their children to have:

Carole (Appendix 9 E): *a little bit more of an international mindedness perspective and that its valued.*

Esther (Appendix 9 B): *My son he's mixed because his daddy's African and I'm western, so he is a child of different cultures, so I think to be able to value that and from the mother tongue perspective as well, I think to really give children the opportunity to communicate more in their mother tongue as well.*

Both Esther and Carole share that other aspects impact on culture, in this case the background and heritage of their children.

Having discussed participants’ views on the complexity of cultural and heritage values, the remainder of this section will highlight some responses from all the participants on their understanding of how or if culture has influenced parental choices of educational setting for their children. Participants discuss values as an intrinsic part of their culture.

One participant highlighted that Hong Kong is an international city and people accept different values and beliefs. This participant (28) further highlights, that

*Hong Kong combines western values and accept other peoples’ values and cultures as people with different cultures live in HK, we accept and combine them, (P 28).*

The impact of the change in landscape through immigration and migration has had an impact on the influence of western values being amalgamated with Confucian values (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). Some participants discussed their opinion in regards the Confucian and western values and if these were different or an amalgamation of cultural values.

* *I think they (Confucian and western cultures) are a combination. Because in Chinese we teach things like love, righteousness, politeness, and in western values are love and conscience, they are both the same,* P 64.
* *Yes, they are a combination of both sets of values, it is because all of those values are about people and getting along with others,* P 63.
* *I think all are shared values by both Confucian and western values. That’s the ways and necessity to live,* P 60.
* *I think values are a combination of cultures, even if Hong Kong or the West use different words to express the values, the meanings are the same. I believe that those values became universal values,* P 58.

Parent Nick, reiterates that it is important to belong to a culture,

*it’s just like culture we need our culture because throughout the history those people in Hong Kong basically learn from the old ways, slightly old school, you know when you done something wrong in my day they hit your head, if you fail your exam, you get punishment.*

He does then reiterate that this is not the way anymore and that children should be allowed to learn from their mistakes.

*Maybe they learn from cultures because maybe depends which school you go to you meet different people and different kinds of teachers, so basically wherever you go whichever kind of school.*

Nick further explains that one of his children is in a setting with many cultures and languages and his son has learned from these aspects, Nick further says the social impact will help learning for later life.

One of the teacher participants highlights a similar aspect of Confucian principles,

*Maybe some traditional parents want me to teach manners to their children and how to be a ‘good girl or boy,* P 6.

Here we can start to see that family and the relationships within the family are perceived to be closer or stronger in the Confucian principles and values than in the westernised values. This strengthens the theory of Velez- Agosto, et al. (2017) which highlights that culture is observed in everyday practices and should be closely linked to the micro systems (3.4.1) rather than seen as being an influence on the periphery of development.

Some parents further highlighted some other values as important such as: *Acceptance of differences (C 5), kindness, (C 7) being caring, honest and positive (C 10) awareness of a variety of cultures.* Parent participants further highlighted kindness as a value they wanted for their children which can be linked to Confucian principles (2.8.1.1)

As previously highlighted (2.7), traditionally Hong Kong has embraced the influx of immigrants. This has led to cross cultural globalised values and the traditional strong Confucian values are diluted, or given broader meaning (Shengtao Wu, 2019). Some parents said they chose a specific kindergarten, because they wanted their child to be surrounded by different cultures.

So according to perceptions discussed in the parent interviews, sharing different values and gaining wider social knowledge will support children in the future. This notion is in line with the Hong Kong guide to pre-primary curriculum by the Education Bureau (EDB), (2019), which highlights the importance of life experiences and a holistic development. Joanne commented that she wanted the kindergarten to have ‘*open values,’* meaning that she wanted acceptance for all people from all walks of life and therefore wasn’t looking for a Confucian or westernised approach but looked more towards main values of acceptance within the setting.

Teachers highlighted some further links with how they believed parents choose a particular kindergarten to link in with their values and culture.

* *Because Kindergarten is the 2nd home to their child, that their child may learn a lot of life values in here, so this is why they based on values taught there*, P 26.
* *Yes, it is because those values are the parents want to teach their children, they want their children can learn these positive values in kindergarten,* P 18*.*
* *They will have different requirements based of different culture and background, and parents will consider their child personality,* P 17.

They indicate here that they understand that kindergartens are not just seen for their academic purpose but also for the values which get shared there.

Another teacher said they chose a specific Confucian value; *One other aspect for HK people, they think as son or daughter that we need to respect our parents and give them better living when they are old,* P 28.Respect for parents can be seen as a specific Confucian value, as it is classed as filial piety, which according to the Confucian principles is seen as showing love for your parents and family (Chen, et al., 2007; Wang, et al., 2010 a).

Sussman (2011) discusses the relationships and obligations within families which are rooted within Confucian principles but might also be generational values; a view echoed by some of the parent and teacher participants.

Speaking of kindness, manners, empathy, socialising, learning how to work as a team, Esther said: *These values were put into us by our parents, and I want my children to have these values, respecting elders and helping people who need help the most.*

She further described these as ‘*old fashioned’* values, therefore these could be either westernised or Confucian values or a combination of both. However, she followed this comment later with *here in Asia, I think family is a big one, being close to your family being respectful to your family, looking out for each other you know, it’s a very collective culture here, compared to say the West, here it is as a collective.*

Teacher participants further mention that the values they perceive in their lives are shared values, or a combination of Confucian and western values because they are:

* *Human Centred, P 56.*
* *Human based and important,* P 55.
* *Due to the convenience of the internet, values can be shared,* P 53.
* *Most values are shared because they are basic,* P 52 *They are shared because they are a social attitude,* P 4.
* *A shared social responsibility,* P 41
* *Values are a standard of personal moral in society, which means how to be a good person,* P 37.
* *They are shared, even if they are Chinese or western, they are able and necessary to learn and be the citizen, both sets of values promote good values to people,* P 33.
* *These combined values are taught by all teachers,* P 18*.*
* *The combination of the values depends on the cultural aspect and intercultural integration of HK (which Is personal to people),* P 17.

One teacher further commented that: *a combination of Confucian and western values has gradually integrated into HK education systems* (P 16). This is apparent in some participant responses which discuss Montessori influences (Cheng, 2006) within the education system. Comments by the teachers highlight the need for respect with one pointing out that *‘a combination (of values) always emphasises that we should respect the elderly*’ (P 2). Another teacher highlights that the values are shared but that there are also some more specific Confucian values*: ‘HK combines western values and accept other people’s values and cultures as people with different cultures live in HK, we accept and combine them’* (P 28)*.* Overall, the consensus from the teacher participants is that the values they encounter in Hong Kong have become mostly shared values but that there are aspects of strong family links which stand out for the Confucian values as highlighted by Du and Tu (1996) and Bennett, (2021).

This section has shown the influence culture can have on views and values held by parents and teachers and has evidenced that culture can have an impact of children’s development as the family makes choices linked to cultural, values and beliefs so therefore it is a way of living rather than a separate entity (Velez-Agosto, et al. 2017). Some responses from parents and teachers link in with heritage, culture and learning from the *‘old’* ways (Nick). The section has shown that culture is a complex concept as Hong Kong has a wide range of inhabitants who all bring with them their own cultural notions. This resonates with Schwartz (2006) who believed culture to be very complex and highlighted the symbols and norms attached to a culture. Tu and Du (1996) and Bennett (2021), also argue that Confucian traditions are a cultural resource, and this resonates throughout all educational settings in Hong Kong.

# 5.5 Social and personal skills.

The Bioecological theory (4.2) focusses on the influence of social aspects, such as for example the impact of parents, siblings, the wider environment, and culture on the development and learning of children. This is echoed in the EDB (2019) which features social development as one of their developmental objectives in their curriculum guidance. The Socio-cultural perspective (3.4.1) further highlights the importance of gaining new knowledge through social interactions (Wertsch, 2009). These social interactions start to occur initially at home. During these parent-child interactions, children start to take on expressions and emotions, which the parent displays. These reactions support the ability to handle their own experiences in later life (Denham et al. 1997, Denham and Kochanoff 2002). By observing their parents, and the behaviours the parents display, children also obtain skills to gain understanding of emotions, which support them to form confident social relationships (Denham et al., 1997, Vivian, et al., 2016).

Personal and social values can have individual as well as collective characteristics (Hofstede, 2001). Therefore, interactions with peers will support a broader value classification for personal as well as social values. Further social interactions with peers start to occur at the kindergarten. For parents it is important to gain understanding of what the kindergarten offers in relation to social and personal values. These values are very dependent on different cultural approaches. Confucian principles for example highlight the need for ‘harmonious social relationships’ (Sussman, 2011), social developments are important within Hong Kong, as historically it was felt that ‘the need of the social group was more important, than the need and aspirations of the individual’ (2.2) (Lau, 1981). Confucian principles have a high social characteristic (Wang and Tamis-Le Monda, 2003), whereby social norms are seen as acting in a social community manner whereby behavioural norms and politeness are seen as very important (Cheah and Rubin, 2003). Western approaches to social characteristics focus more on independence and assertiveness (Ratzinger, 2019) among other values. Family values can influence the way parenting is undertaken, and this can at times cause conflict concerning personal values and social or cultural values (2.4).

Research participants in this study deliberated on these different approaches to social and personal values.

During interviews, parents spoke about which social and personal values they felt were important for their child. Parents highlighted a varied set of values, which they felt were important as shown below:

**Esther**: *Values-, being kind, manners, empathy, socialising, learning how to work as a team-……. these values were put into us by our parents, and I want my children to have these values, respecting elders and helping people who need help the most.* **Esther** also says: *Healthy eating, good parent teacher relationship, respect for different backgrounds.*

**Christine***: ‘Humanitarian values, linked to maintaining our cultural values which we have learned through our childhood especially our religion- moral values’*

Here a heritage and personal side of the values can be seen, as Esther highlights that these are values shared generationally by their family. Christine also points out maintaining cultural values, so both parents feel these cultural and heritage values are important for their children.

**Jane:** *Learning early public speaking skills, so getting them in front of a class to explain something and just developing that confidence.*

***Joanne:*** *The understanding that families are made up differently* (referring to own home situation*) to be respectful and to be kind to one another, especially at the kindergarten level, and to share well, to celebrate your own achievements and those of other people.*

Joanne also highlights the importance of being able to follow instructions and participate in a group, have a friend and be a friend. She further explains the importance of telling the truth as a value. Joanne further highlights the importance of problem solving and being curious.

*I want them to be curious and confident. I want them to know how to learn, I want them to understand how to solve problems and believe that they have the power to solve problems or answer questions yeah and I want them to be academically generous and intellectually generous.*

**Nick**: *Children should become more social and more outgoing they need to learn right from wrong.*

Here it is apparent that parents have a range of values they believe to be important for their children. These values show specific personal values such as being kind, having good manners and having good social interactions, and links with heritage and cultural values. Parents further discuss broader values of understanding the wider community and social structures within the society such as humanitarian values and gaining an understanding that families are made up differently, as well as values of learning right from wrong.

The parents also highlighted social and personal skills such as being caring, having discipline, self-care, kindness, social skills, respect for difference, confidence to name a few, they also wanted their children to show empathy and learn how to share.

Of the 66 teachers who responded to the question about which values they felt parents wanted for their children highlighted the following: 19 said ‘respect’; 17 said ‘honesty’; and 12 said they believed parents wanted children who are ‘polite’. Teachers further highlighted; knowledge, love, ability to share, language skills, being confident as some of the examples.

Many of the values highlighted by teachers are linked to social values and learning to fit into the society the families live in. As Greenfield, et al., (2003) highlighted, the end goal of Asian families with a Confucian culture is not to accomplish independence from others, but to achieve interdependence through the implementation of collective objectives for the benefit of the social unit, starting with the family (Greenfield, et al., 2003). This wider social expectation reverberates through all educational settings as well as family homes. We can therefore see that there is some overlap with the values mentioned, as teachers err more on the side of teaching children how to show respect and honesty, but the sentiment overall is clear. Parents and teachers want children to have a holistic approach to values and to learn good social skills which benefit the community but also strong personal skills to enable the children to cope within the society they live in. The values of parents and teachers highlighted in this section, can be seen to have been intertwined with the belief system and cultural aspects of Hong Kong (Keller, et al., 2003).

# 5.6 Minority theme.

During the data collection, some answers and discussions by the participants did not appear to fit into the previously highlighted specific themes. When undertaking the initial data analysis these were originally discarded as not fitting into the themes which stood out, however, these outliers tell their own story (Quentin, 2021), and even though during some research projects this information may be discarded because it is felt the outliers do not to discuss the main topic and are often discussed as: ‘nasty data…, too extreme… or not to reflect genuine responses’ (McClelland 2014: NP). I felt that this outlier aspect whereby the value of play is highlighted had to be included as this influences choices parents make regarding academic choices and what they feel is important or influential in their lives. The next subsection discusses the following theme: the value of play as discussed by the parents.

# 5.6.1 The value of play.

There has been some resistance from teachers to incorporating the child-initiated play and learning through play approach in Hong Kong (1.6) (Ho, 2015). This approach was first introduced during 2007 in the Guide for the ‘Pre-Primary Curriculum’ in Hong Kong and was later revised and renamed to Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide (EDB, 2017).

Parents and teachers believed in and were, prior to this new approach, used to the Confucian didactic approaches (Wong and Rao, 2015, Yuen and Greishaber, 2009). The EDB (2019) included plans to enhance the curriculum with play-based learning as well as including wider life experiences and exploration. Neither parents nor teachers highlighted that a play-based approach was something they particularly valued or which came to the forefront of their mind. Lau (2012) previously highlighted (1.4) that there seemed to be a disconnect between traditional Confucian values and the more Westernised approaches to learning and it is possible that this has not changed. One of the interviewed participants commented on aspects of play and learning discussed below. Carole stated: *if people are truly passionate about early years from a professional perspective now as an organisation, then they value play.*

However, Carole (Appendix 9 E) acknowledged that some settings use the enquiry based and play-based approaches, as marketing strategies for their kindergarten. When she visited those kindergartens, Carole reported that she observed that children had at times to sit and complete worksheets, which she acknowledges is not a true play-based approach. This is also highlighted by Wong and Rao (2015), who say that tutorial classes whereby children as young as 6 months must learn to read and undertake maths have been common practice in Hong Kong (2.6). As previously highlighted, this is developmentally not an unrealistic task.

Jane (Appendix 9 D) also emphasized play in her interview, expressing her opinion that it is *nice if children can have free play at the start of the day for 20 minutes.* Here we can see that some kindergartens incorporate some aspects of play, however 20 minutes of free play can be challenged as not incorporating a child centred or play-based curriculum. Esther (appendix 9 B) stated that she wanted more creative, free play for her child. Only two parent respondents to the questionnaire mentioned play. One parent (C 14) shared that they chose a kindergarten because they went there themselves as a child, and recalled that it was a supportive learning environment, which focussed on play and the whole child. Another parent (C 11) said: *I like its philosophy and how it values play-based learning.*

When looking at the 66 responses to the teacher questionnaires, one (P 27) mentioned Forest school as one of the choices they felt parents would make for their child. Another teacher (P 30) highlighted Montessori and Reggio inspired kindergartens. This could be seen as making a choice for a different type of education, for example nurturing the child’s natural desire for gaining independence, knowledge and understanding of the world, as well as respect for child’s natural development (Montessori northwest, online), rather than making a choice for a more academic approach. However, no direct reference was made to play, play-based or child-centred learning, as part of choices they felt parents made regarding the choice of a kindergarten. Given that play has been incorporated into the early childhood curriculum by the EDB (2019), this is a surprising outcome as play is therefore not high on the radar of the total of 100 parent and teacher participants who took part in this study via interviews and questionnaires.

This section has shown that some parents who were interviewed expressed a desire for a more play-based or child-centred approach, however teachers did not mention this aspect of play within the kindergarten. So, although the play-based approach was first introduced in 1991 and re-introduced in 2003 (Curriculum Development Council, 2006), it appears that this may be included in the daily life of the kindergarten however it is not explicitly thought of by teachers as a characteristic parents may want for their children. Data reported in this study indicated that it was unclear if there was a disconnect between government policy and cultural aspects of engaging in learning (Wong and Rao, 2015, Yang and Li, 2018 a). This lack of clarity could be because parents and teachers were not specifically asked about play-based learning.

The previous sections within this chapter have highlighted the different themes. The themes are Curriculum (5.2) Cultural and Heritage values (5.3), Social and Personal skills (5.4) and one Minority Theme (5.5): the Value of Play (5.5.1).

These themes underpin the key theme of Academic Values. Academic values have historically in Hong Kong been seen as the gateway to a better future, this is why the Hong Kong perception of most parents and teachers is still that children should gain very high academic skills from a young age.

According to the findings of this study it has become apparent that parents have two main choices to make for their child. Which social and personal skills do they feel are important for their children? And which primary and secondary school route do they want for their child? They then need to pair these two choices to select a kindergarten which fits into their values and beliefs for their child and the future of the child.

Throughout this study it has become apparent that teacher values are led by the values set out by the Education Bureau (2022), rather than determined by teachers’ own personal values as the values and beliefs they are expected to deliver have been set out within guidance for the teachers. This then has an impact on choices parents want to make as they will need to look at wider aspects within the kindergartens to see which one they feel is the best choice for their child.

# 5.7 Discussion.

Throughout this chapter, I have discussed the findings and linked the results with literature. At the start of this thesis, the following research questions were posed and formulated, and are recalled below to present the findings and demonstrate how the discussion in chapters 4 and 5 have identified some answers to these questions. Research questions were as follows and will be discussed in the sections highlighted:

* What are parental values in general, and in specific in Hong Kong? (5.6.1).
* Which aspects (economic, political, and global) may impact on these values? (5.6.2).
* What values do teachers hold in Hong Kong in early years settings? (5.6.3).
* Do the values of parents and teachers match or are there clear divisions? (5.6.4).

# 5.7.1 Parental values in general, and specific in Hong Kong.

When discussing values, morals as well as beliefs and the principles, highlighted by parents in Hong Kong it became apparent that there is a strong overlap with Confucian values as well as wider cultural values (Tudge et al., 2000) (2.4). The importance of parental values needs to be considered as they influence actions and approaches to their children's educational journey (Kohlberg, 1984, Jose., et al., 2000). It is also known that parents may have collective values, which impact on the choices they make for their children (Jose, et al., 2000). These collective values may or may not be shared with the kindergarten and it is therefore important to establish what these values are and if these are collective values of the parents and the teachers at the kindergartens. As previously highlighted (2.4), reiterated here for clarity, parental values and belief systems are frequently seen as emphasising child rearing objectives, (Cheah and Rubin, 2003). Therefore, parental values may be focussed on the whole child as teacher values may be more focused on the academic side of child development.

Throughout this study a variety of values and beliefs have been discussed. Parents (4.6.1) all highlighted aspects of social skills and social behaviours, this was further highlighted throughout chapter 4. Parents spoke about the values of languages, their own home language as well as opportunities to learn to speak the Chinese language (4.7.2 a). Play-based and child centred learning was emphasised by parents, as this was seen to be important for making those social connections with friends, as well as supporting wider development in the child. Wong and Rao (2015) discussed this child centred approach as contributing to the future wellbeing of the society as well as supporting independence and self confidence in children. Parents further discussed values such as respect, kindness, self-esteem, the enjoyment of learning as well as the inclusion of children understanding their heritage and culture (chapter 4). These values all contribute to the whole of Hong Kong society. Other values discussed were academic attainment, ideology of the philosophy of life, creativity, acceptance of different family structures, safe environment and speaking or encountering children who spoke a different language (4.7.1). These were some of the values parents felt were important in their child’s upbringing. Throughout chapter 4 there is a wide range of values but that most of these have a social aspect and therefore it can be deduced that social connections and behaviours are deemed important for the parents.

# 5.7.2 Were there any wider aspects which impacted on values displayed by the participants from both groups?

The Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide policy brought in by the Hong Kong Education Bureau (2019) shared the revised curriculum, which affected several aspects of how kindergartens were run. The new guidelines included principles for the teachers but also for the parents (1.6.1). This revised curriculum established the need for a more child centred approach within the kindergartens as well as a focus on three learning elements (knowledge, skills, and attitudes), this change from a didactic curriculum to a child centred curriculum changed the way teachers had to engage with children as well as the choices parents had. It was not established if parents were fully aware of these curriculum changes and therefore their choices may have been influenced if they had been fully aware.

Another impact that was felt throughout the completion of the interviews and the questionnaires and which affected all participants was the political unrest (1.3), and the changes this brought to their freedom and uncertainties when traveling through the country to get to their place of education or work as this was often impeded. The uncertainty of what was happening daily had a big impact on their sense of safety in the moment as well as for their futures (Cheung and Hughes, 2020). The protest and demonstrations during this time stopped abruptly when the Covid-19 pandemic swept the world.

During January 2020, the first Covid-19 cases were reported in Hong Kong and from then on Hong Kong like the rest of the world came to a standstill (1.3). The impact for parents meant that they could not travel to work and that their children were at home, and they had to educate them themselves. Kindergartens and schools delivered educational content via online platforms; however, this was difficult for many parents, as they also had to work from home. The impact of these aspects is difficult to comprehend, as it is not possible to measure this impact on values, emotional and social aspects. Here a link can be seen clearly with the socio-cultural theory as the environmental changes will have had a clear impact on the lives of the participants and their lifestyle will have been impacted by the two main events (political unrest and pandemic). These aspects which influence the lives of the participants would be an interesting topic for future research.

# 5.7.3 What values do teachers hold in Hong Kong in early years settings?

The literature search for this study found no wider literature discussing teacher values, other than guidelines set by the Education Bureau (EDB,2022) (2.8). The guidelines gave some professional values to adhere to but did not consider any personal values teachers may have had. It was apparent from existing wider literature that approaches to teaching in Hong Kong had historically been didactic and that these have changed in recent years as Western approaches (Fung and Cheng, 2012) have influenced the Hong Kong government in making some pedagogical changes (EDB, 2019). The cultural Confucian principles and learning strategies are still lingering and the perception that didactic learning is needed in settings to gain good academic results has not quite been erased (2.8) (Yang and Li, 2018 a). Velez-Agosto, et al., (2017), highlighted that culture has a big impact on the central processes of a person’s development and these can be seen in the teachers approaches to learning. Yang and Li, (2018 a) agree with this concept as they further discuss that most teachers still have the Confucian cultural approach that children need strong academic achievements to gain a better future and there is a perception by teachers that this is what parents want for their children. This is in direct disagreement with the findings from the government review report (Report on the Review of the Kindergarten Education Scheme 2021) which reported on the implementation of the ‘Free Quality Kindergarten Education Scheme’ (Education Bureau, 2016 a). The report stated that:

Nearly all participating teachers agreed with the notion of ‘learning through play’ and had provided students with more opportunities to play and explore. (Report on the Review of the Kindergarten Education Scheme 2021: p 57 b).

Teachers may have implemented more play; however, the findings of this study show that teachers still believe in a more academic didactic approach. Studies however have shown that learning through play is an important strategy to promote children’s development which impacts beyond the kindergarten years. (Parker, et al., 2022)

I found that values discussed by participating Hong Kong teachers were closely aligned with the values parents discussed. Teachers mostly reported their beliefs that parents choose kindergartens for their academic approaches. They stated learning attitudes, interest in learning and result orientated aspects (4.7.2) as values they expected parents wanted. Teachers also commented on social skills and specifically making friends and being a friend, as well as respect, honesty, and love, which can be traced back to the Confucian principles (2.8.1.1). They further highlighted a range of personal developmental aspects. The overriding view teachers had was that they believed parents choose a kindergarten related to academic achievement as well as qualifications teachers held and the curriculum which was being delivered there.

# 5.7.4 Do the values of parents and teachers match or are there clear divisions?

Throughout the analysis it was primarily the personal and social values which were in line with each other, but teachers had a more academic approach than parents did. This could be due to the job role whereby the expectation is that there is an emphasis on academia. Parents showed that academia is important but that having good social skills and being a good person were more important. This study has found that both parents and teachers who participated had some strong beliefs regarding showing respect, being honest, being a good friend as well as having an enjoyment for learning. Three interviewed parents (Nick, Jane, Joanne, 4.6.1.) showed that they felt that if their child had good social skills that the learning and academic side would automatically follow in the future, and they reported their view that this was not so important at a young age. Another parent (Ester 4.6.1.) believed that to survive the education system in Hong Kong, compromises must be made in regard to prioritising academic achievement. The parents who responded to the questionnaire highlighted social skills, but also said they chose a kindergarten for the convenient location, academic achievement, and social skills. Overall, this section has discussed the values and beliefs as considered by participating parents and teachers.

# 5.8 Chapter summary.

Overall, the findings in this study show that the parents in the study have many values and beliefs they want to pass on to their children. Social aspects (5.4) appeared to have a very strong base as a value system, which was shown in many ways. However, there was a strong cultural belief that academic values were an overriding factor (4.7.2 b). Culturally there appears to be a strong belief that to have a secure future in a school of their choice (primary then secondary, which allows an opportunity for university at a later age) was the most important aspect of choosing a kindergarten for their child (4.7.1 and 4.7.2). Most parents highlighted many other influences (4.7.1-4.7.2) however the overriding factor was that parents perceived that their children needed to get onto the academic ladder to enable them to gain a much better chance at having a successful future.

Section 5.6 has discussed the sub-questions of this research which show that academia is perceived to be very important, and this reinforces the cultural notion of the importance of education in Hong Kong. Parents and teachers agreed that personal and social attributes and values are very important, and these are needed to gain that academic attainment. The study showed that the choice of kindergarten was important for parent participants as this has an impact on the future of their child.

This chapter has reported the identified themes which have arisen from the data. The themes were discussed using the Braun and Clarke (2022) approach to thematic analysis. The themes as discussed in this chapter were, Academic values, Cultural values, Curriculum, Social and Personal skills as well as Minority themes which included the practice of kindergarten interviews and the value of play. This chapter has brought together the voices of the participants. The different sections have discussed aspects which participating parents and teachers believe to be important values and beliefs which are related to academic aspects and specifically what supports parents to make a choice for their children, regarding the kindergarten they choose. This chapter has shown that there is a thread running through all aspects of the topics which closely link with academic aspects as well as cultural beliefs and notions.

The next chapter will discuss my reflections on carrying out the study, and recommendations.

# Chapter 6 Conclusions, Reflections and Recommendations.

## 

# 6.1 The aims of the study.

This final chapter offers an opportunity to bring together the study and subsequent findings. In order to reflect upon the implications of this knowledge and recognize and value the current context of the Hong Kong approaches for parents and the manner in which they choose a kindergarten for their children as well as the opportunity to share the findings and new knowledge with teachers and settings in Hong Kong.

The aim of the study was to identify but not to generalise, the research question: How do values associated with academic achievement influence the choices Hong Kong parents make about early childhood provision?

Throughout the study I also aimed to gain broader knowledge regarding other factors that influenced the decisions parents made for their children regarding choosing a kindergarten for their child.

This chapter reflects on the process and the outcomes of the study and includes some recommendations. The aims of the study are reiterated (6.1), and my personal learning journey has been reflected upon. The recommendations highlight first the findings which were that parents and teachers have very similar values regarding personal and social development. This section further discusses some of the limitations but also how because of limitations some parts of the study were very positive (6.2). The chapter includes a section on looking to the future (6.3) and what my contribution of knowledge is and finally includes a synopsis of my overall argument (6.4) and reflections (6.5) and finishes with a short closing remark (6.6).

# 6.2 Conclusions and recommendations.

The most important finding in this study, which cannot be generalised due to the small data set, was that most of the parents and teachers have similar ideas about social and personal values (4.7.2). This finding that they have correlating values may simply support the knowledge teachers and parents already have or may be a reminder for both teachers and parents to reflect on their values and their beliefs, to establish if these are personal or educational values.

All participants in this study came from different backgrounds, with different experiences but there was still a great overlap of beliefs, values and hopes for their children.

All three data sets (appendices 7,8 and 9) show that teachers and parents have strong values and beliefs regarding: respect, honesty, love, sharing, independence, morality, building confidence as well as learning how to be responsible. These values are shared throughout the thesis.

As the study shows, at times the teachers were not aware that some practices they undertake daily are closely linked to Confucian principles and beliefs. These wider cultural beliefs have become integrated within Hong Kong society without necessarily being explicitly understood, named, or spoken about. This study may go some way to having teachers and parents reflect on these values and question if this is what they still believe personally or if it is a collective, cultural, or governmental view.

Although this small-scale study cannot be generalised, there is opportunity for Kindergartens to revisit their own curriculum and question if their curriculum is truly play-based and child centred, and how to incorporate wider parental values and academic practices to ensure children's development is supported from a holistic point of view(appendix 9). Parents can make clearer choices by asking more questions from the kindergartens they visit, and parents can interview the setting as well as the setting interviewing their child to see if they are compatible.

I would also hope to enable policy changes in Hong Kong, whether this is local policy or government policy, it is necessary to include the wider voices of the stakeholders, in this case the parents, children and educational staff. Therefore, literature needs to consider the views parents and teachers hold, rather than only looking at the policies set by the government without having the voice of parents and teachers explicitly shared within articles, policies, and books.

To enable teachers, parent and wider interested parties to gain access to the findings of this study, I am intending to share the findings of this study within the Hong Kong context through journal articles, as well as continuing to share my findings via conferences within Hong Kong and the UK in the future. I am intending to also share short snippets of the findings via Facebook groups in Hong Kong with links to wider reading to give parents who may not be attending conferences or read journals an opportunity to read some of the findings in a less academic environment.

# 6.3 Limitations.

This qualitative study has shown some insightful parental stories and beliefs and has opened a conversation regarding values and beliefs which impact on the choices parents make for their children. The cultural views regarding academia as recalled by parents in this study, the influx of wider nationalities and their values, and the personal and social values parents want to instil in their children are all woven through the fibre of Hong Kong and through the choices parents make for their children.

Throughout the undertaking of this study there were some limitations. The impact the political unrest and the pandemic have had on my research is difficult to quantify. Covid-19 intensified the dislocation amongst the people in Hong Kong following their political unrest. During my last visit to Hong Kong, I had just been able to engage with teachers there, to complete questionnaires for my study and was preparing to start interviewing parents during my next visit to Hong Kong. The social and institutional pressures, due initially to the political unrest and protests followed by the pandemic, consequently prevented me from returning to Hong Kong for the next two years. This had the impact on the capacity to interview parents in their own surroundings as was the initial intention. Parents were not able to be seen face to face in Hong Kong and therefore the snowball approach which had been planned was not a method which could be undertaken.

There was also a time suspension for my research, as I believed that finding parents to interview during political unrest and the Covid-19 pandemic was not the best time to investigate discussions on values and beliefs. I firmly believed the stress of both occurrences in the lives of Hong Kong parents would have had an impact on their values of freedom and concern for the health of their families. Their ability to take part in an honest and open interview could have been impeded by this. I also believed at the time of data collection that long held values, of participants, may have been shaken, even if temporarily, by these outside factors and therefore they may not have been the deep-rooted values people hold.

Another initial limitation was the number of parents who were able to take part in the interviews as it would have given wider, richer data if more participants had been able to take part. This limited the scope of the findings because it was a small-scale project, the findings cannot be generalised, but can be used to open conversations with kindergartens to start an awareness of parental beliefs and values and how these could be implemented within the kindergarten and their policies. However, by widening the study to include online questionnaires for parents, I was able to gain much more information and to give a wider audience the opportunity to have their voices heard and included in the study. The combination of the parental voices in the questionnaires and the parental interviews gave me a much better understanding of their values, ideas, and beliefs for their children.

# 6.4 Looking to the future - Contribution to knowledge.

This research provides an original perspective as the focus is on values (parental and teacher values) rather than the curriculum and academic aspects. The important voices of the parents and teachers have been represented in this thesis. These voices have not previously been presented within journals and other reading material. This thesis provides a platform and recognition that parent and teacher values are an important viewpoint within the educational journey of a child and thus need to be recognised as such. This thesis has listened and represented opinions and values from a small group of participants who are traditionally overlooked when it comes to writing the curriculum or educational policies linked with personal values (Ryan and Grieshaber, 2005). This has enabled me to undertake an original exploration of parental and teacher experiences and values.

During the research I undertook for this thesis, it was difficult to find a wider body of available literature which considered the values of Hong Kong parents or indeed the values and beliefs of Hong Kong teachers, who teach the children and what they felt was important for the children and their future holistic development. I felt it was important that these are considered when deciding on a kindergarten for the children. Parents did however show that they opted for a kindergarten which had certain aspects and values which they believed in.

However, the overarching aspect of the cultural academic pressures to achieve highly, still run through the education system. I believe my contribution to knowledge is the fact that I have started to share the various values parents and teachers believe to be important. If kindergartens and indeed any educational setting were more aware of these values, then they could adapt their teaching and pedagogy to suit the wider public. Kindergartens could implement a true play-based curriculum rather than just using this as a marketing strategy.

It has to be taken into account that all families and all children have different needs, as has been shown within this study, needs such as the inclusion for a ‘two mum’ family, acceptance for children who are from parents with a different background, religion, colour or beliefs, children who have been adopted, children who live in a single parent family, or children who are from a different country and have migrated to Hong Kong. By understanding the values, the parents hold and want to pass on to their children, the kindergarten and wider education sector can make adaptations to support and share these values.

This study can provide a reference for parents and teachers in Hong Kong to examine their own practice within the educational settings and to work together with parents to find out what their parental values and shared values are and how to incorporate or strengthen these within the kindergartens.

This study contributes to a unique viewpoint, combining knowledge through an exploration of historical aspects, current views of parents and teachers as well as the impact of environmental and political aspects on educational settings and theoretical underpinnings, which have occurred during the last few years. This study provides a theoretical contribution to knowledge and has exposed an underexplored topic of parental values and how these impact on choices parents make for their children.

# 6.5 A synopsis of my overall argument and thoughts:

Throughout this study it has been important to reflect on the main research question. From these reflections it also became apparent to me that there are some areas which lack understanding of the parental values and how these impact on parents’ choices. By gaining a deeper insight into these values I have been able to summarise some of my thoughts and findings.

1. **The literature on parental values and needs, regarding early childhood education**.

Parental and teacher views on values and beliefs are not explicitly discussed in existing wider available literature. To get a clearer insight into this, this study would need to be expanded into a much larger participant cohort to establish a wider understanding of the values of both parents and teachers and to see if these values concur with each other or if there are clear differences. Park and Cheah (2005), discuss that parental emphasis on the importance of their values and belief systems is not researched in a wider context. I have not been able to find any information that this has changed since 2005. This thesis is a contribution to the wider field of literature.

1. **Parents have family and personal values for their children.**

Culture in Hong Kong, especially in this multicultural context, expects high academic knowledge. An early start with learning and gaining academic knowledge to acquire a specific place at a specific kindergarten. To enable children to stream through to specific primary and secondary education. This influences some parents to make different educational choices for their child. Parents and the family have an important part to play in sharing their personal and family values through the generations. This links in with Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory (1978) which is also discussed by Archer et al. (2010) and Sikder and Fleer (2015).

1. **Culture runs through all aspects of life as a thread**.

This facet of culture being ingrained within the Hong Kong society is in clear opposition to Bronfenbrenner’s bio ecological theory, as Bronfenbrenner (1979) puts culture at the further point of the scale as being influential. This study shows that children are influenced by culture before they are even born as the cultural aspects in their parents’ lives influence and affect decisions parents make for the child. I am therefore in agreement with Velez-Agosto., et al., (2017) who also argues that culture is part of the fibre of society and impacts a child directly.

The impact of culture runs through this whole thesis as a thread. All aspects of the Hong Kong society show that they have taken on some of the cultural Confucian beliefs, even if participants did not always understand that this was the case. Teachers had some questions regarding what Confucian is and what is a western approach in values, as when someone is brought up in a country, they do not necessarily distinguish the diverse values as different, and they might take on the values they believe in whether these are western or Confucian, or a combination of both.

# 6.6 Reflection on the process, my learning journey.

During the EdD journey, I came across some challenging aspects and encountered a lot of positive phases.

One of the main challenges arose during my first part of my study, the political situation in Hong Kong which was swiftly followed by Covid-19. Both these unanticipated and major circumstances meant that I had to change my approach to gathering my data. I did discuss with my supervisor how I could make changes, and we checked the ethical approval which did include online interviews and questionnaires. My approach then changed from focus groups and face to face interviews to online data collection. To enable me to do this, I asked for support from my Hong Kong colleagues, who helped me to find the appropriate Facebook sites to post questionnaires for parents in Hong Kong. I choose to use different districts within Hong Kong to enable me to gain wider views from parents from different backgrounds. From these questionnaires I also gained my interviewees, who after seeing my post on Facebook and on LinkedIn came forward to support me. As a researcher this was initially very daunting but has given me so much more insight into research opportunities and how social media can be a great way of acquiring a wider audience.

There was a further research opportunity which I felt with hindsight that I missed. During the first stage of data collection, it would have been an option to interview parents during the time of unrest (political and Pandemic) (1.6) and then interview the same participants again several months or even a year later to see if their values had changed or if these were deep rooted values. I think for future research it would be good to reflect on this and to not shy away from difficult situations but to embrace the possibility of gaining deeper knowledge on the participants’ values to establish if these are these deep rooted and long term or very interchangeable depending on environmental factors.

Another limitation at times was timing. I was undertaking the research from England whilst the participants were in a different time zone in Hong Kong. I focussed on creating some personal connections and building some form of a relationship with the participants I was interviewing. I initially emailed the participants to make contact and had several short email conversations before meeting my participants online. This was far more challenging than if I had been able to meet face to face or had been introduced to the parents by someone they already knew, such as a member of staff from a kindergarten. Despite these challenges, the interviews were open and honest; I first spoke about myself briefly to establish an open relationship where participants felt that I was also happy to share parts of myself. I then reiterated why I was undertaking the research and what would happen with the gathered data. I felt that I had been able to gain some excellent information from the participants. During the interviews I shared my knowledge of Hong Kong as well as wider knowledge with the parents. I felt that by giving the participants some information back (for example a good Forest school for their child in Hong Kong, as well as some other outdoor activities I knew were taking place) and by telling them a little about my own life (mum, two children, lecturer, migrated to England from the Netherlands) I felt I was getting a better relationship and the participants didn’t feel like I was asking questions without sharing a small part of my own life. The data gathered from these interviews gave me a real boost to research in more depth the values, issues, concerns and daily lives of the parents and children in Hong Kong.

Another positive from the online method was that the participants and I did not need to travel, and this saved a lot of time and money. The participants all undertook the interview in their own homes, and this also made them feel more at ease as they were in familiar surroundings, and they did not have the concern of childcare. Participants spoke about the impact Covid-19 had had on them and their children as they were homeschooling them, this may also have impacted on the values they discussed as they found themselves in a different scenario than the usual going to school and work scenario, which may have affected how they felt about specific aspects. The issues parents discussed made me realise that all daily events impact on parents and if I as a researcher could ensure that they didn’t need to take too much time out to take part in my research, then this would stop my research impeding on their daily lives. I also learned that parents appeared more at ease undertaking the interviews during their chosen time and from home behind a screen.

I learned that although it has been challenging and at times stressful, I managed to refocus my approach to finding participants. Since completing the data gathering, I have been able to use these new skills of finding a different way to gather data to support my own (often international) students to undertake research in a similar manner. I learned to build new connections with people across the world, who on a normal day I would never have met. I have learned to deal with stress, disappointment and how to refocus my thoughts after outside influences impacted on my research. I have also realised how feedback impacts me and how to move forward from it. I have improved my knowledge on Hong Kong, Confucian principles and parental and teachers’ values and beliefs. I have been able to set myself goals and have been able to make informed decisions on information I have read and find the most relevant material. I have gained more knowledge in how to analyse data as well as used my networking skills to help me on this research path.

All these skills have helped me to write this thesis as well as supported me in my job as a lecturer as I can clearly see how my approach to certain aspects may impact on other people, so I decide different approaches more carefully. I am also very happy to share my newfound research knowledge and have been able to do so with many of my students as well as during conferences.

Throughout this journey I have met lots of kind and supportive people, participants who were happy to take part, some of whom have stayed in contact after the initial interview. Colleagues in Hong Kong who in the very early stages were so happy to help me find participants and set up lots of visits to different kindergartens, where I was welcomed, and time was given to me by people who had busy lives. I have had some excellent discussions with work colleagues at the university of Hull as well as study colleagues/friends at the university of Sheffield who were more than happy to thrash out some of my challenges, helped me to smile through my tears at times or support me with coffee, cake and a listening ear as well as sharing wider reading and research. All these peer and collegial relationships have helped form my thesis, the support from all these people has been invaluable, the sharing of knowledge, respect and excitement for this research is unmeasurable. The international intercommunication between myself and Hong Kong colleagues and participants also meant that we learned new values and ideas from each other as well as forging deeper collegial relationships. This is again a point where I learned how important sharing ideas is within research, as all parties concerned gain new knowledge through the process.

Another important lesson I learned was that time is a strange concept, as at certain times, throughout this journey, I managed to write and concentrate and feel I was well on my way with the study, but at other times my life and the impact of what was happening around me (Covid-19, sadly two major bereavements, two house moves, a wedding, my own health issues and work related pressures) had such an impact on me that moving forward with the study was at times challenging and sometimes even impossible.

Throughout this thesis journey, I have had the enormous pleasure of visiting many kindergartens within Hong Kong; the teachers and staff in these settings have always had the best intentions for the children and have worked very hard to support their development. There are many different options of kindergartens available for parents with different angles to their pedagogical approaches. I just felt strongly that the parental values were not considered during the educational journey the families and children undertake.

I have learned a huge amount throughout this journey and have met some amazing children, parents, teachers, and wider staff in all those settings; they have made it possible for me to transform my initial idea into a thesis.

# 6.7 A closing remark.

I would like to thank all people who have been involved in making this thesis come to fruition and close with a Chinese proverb:

*‘A child's life is like a piece of paper on which every person leaves a mark*,’

(unknown author)

# References.

Aadland, E., (2010). Values in professional practice: Towards a critical reflective methodology. Journal of Business Ethics, 97, 461–472.

Archer, L., DeWitt, J., Osborne, J., Dillon, J., Willis, B., and Wong, B., (2010). ‘Doing’ science versus ‘being’ a scientist: examining 10/11-year-old school children’s constructions of science through the lens of identity. Science Education, 94, 617–639. https://DOI.org/10.1002/sce.20399.

Arsalan., (2018) Are Cultural and traditional values still important in society today? Available from: [Are cultural and traditional values still important in society today? - Academic Master (academic-master.com)](https://academic-master.com/cultural-traditional-values-still-important-society-today/) accessed 11/3/2022.

Arthur, L., Crossley, M., and Mc. Ness, E. (2016). Revisiting insider-outsider research in comparative and international education. Oxford, Symposium Books.

Ary, D., Jacobs, L.C., Knupp Sorensen, C., and Walker, D.A., (2019) Introduction to research in education, tenth ed. Cengage, Boston, MA.

Asia Society, (2019) What is PISA and Why Does it Matter? Available from: [https://asiasociety.org/global-cities-education-network/what-PISA-and-why-does-it-matter](https://asiasociety.org/global-cities-education-network/what-pisa-and-why-does-it-matter), accessed 19-7-2019.

Atkinson, P., (2017) Thinking Ethnographically. London, Sage.

Audit Commission, (2013). Pre-primary education voucher scheme (director of audit report No. 60). Hong Kong: Hong Kong Audit Commission.

Babbie, E. R., (2010) The Practice of Social Research, London, Cengage Learning.

Barber, B. K., Olsen, J. E., and Shagle, S. C., (1994). Associations between parental psychological and behavioural control and youth internalized and externalized behaviours. Child Development, 65, 1120-1136.

Barber, B. K., Stoltz, H. E., and Olsen, J. A., (2005). Parental support, psychological control, and behavioural control: Assessing relevance across time, culture, and method. Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 70, 1-137.

Baumann, C., Hamin, H., and Yang, S. J. S. J., (2016), 'Work ethic formed by pedagogical approach: evolution of institutional approach to education and competitiveness' Asia Pacific Business Review, vol. 22, no. 3, pp. 374-396. [https://DOI.org/10.1080/13602381.2015.1129767](https://doi.org/10.1080/13602381.2015.1129767).

Bennett, T., Savage, M., Silva, E.B., Warde, A., Gayo-Cal, M., and Wright, D., (2009) Culture, Class and Distinction, Taylor Francis, London.

Bennett, M. M., (2021). Hong Kong as special cultural zone: Confucian geopolitics in practice. Dialogues in Human Geography, 11(2), 236-243. https://DOI.org/10.1177/20438206211017740.

Benny, R., (2023) Your Guide to Early Years and Primary Admissions in Hong Kong available from https://www.playtimes.com.hk/your-guide-to-early-years-and-primary-admissions-in-hong-kong/ accessed 1-6-2023.

Benincas, L., (2012) Teaching Lessons in exclusion: Researchers assumptions and the ideology of normality. International Research Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 25 (8) 1087-1106.

British Educational Research Association (2018) Ethical guidelines for educational research. London: BERA. Available from: https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethicalguidelines-for-educational-research-2018 Accessed 4-4-2023.

Berndt T. J., Cheung P. C., Lau S., Hau K. T., Lew W. J., (1993). Perceptions of parenting in mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong: sex differences and societal differences. Dev. Psychol. 29 156–164. 10.1037/0012-1649.29.1.156.

Biggs, J., (1992) The Psychology of educational assessment and the Hong Kong scene. Bulleting of the Hong Kong Psychological Society 28(29), 5-26.

Blackledge, A., and Creese. A., (2010) Multilingualism: A Critical Perspective. Advances in Sociolinguistics. London: Continuum.

Bourdieu, P., (1999). Ratiuni practice (Political reasons), Bucuresti, Editura Meridiane.

Bornstein, M. H and Landsford, J. E., (2010) parenting in M.H Bornstein (ed) handbook of cultural development science (pp 259-277) New York, NY: Psychology.

Bornstein, M.H., And Tamils-Le Monde, C. S., (2010) Mother- infant interaction. In Bremner, G. and Wachs, T. (eds) handbook of infant development (2nd Ed., pp458-482) London, UK: Blackwell Publishers.

Bourne, R., and Shackleton, J.R., (2017) IEA Discussion paper No 81. Getting the state out of Pre-school and childcare, ending the nannying of UK parents. available from: https://iea.org.uk/media/many-families-now-spend-a-third-of-their-net-income-on-childcare-finds-new-report/ [file:///F:/Feb%202019/Documents/book/Getting-state-our-of-childcare-FINAL.pdf](about:blank), accessed 29-5-2020.

Braun, V., and Clarke, V., (2014) Successful qualitative research, a practical guide for beginners. London, Sage.

Braun, V., Clarke, V., and Gray, D., (2017). Collecting qualitative data. A practical guide to textual, media and virtual techniques. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Bronfenbrenner, U., (1974). Developmental research, public policy, and the ecology of childhood. Child Development, 45, 1–5.

Bronfenbrenner, U., (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. American Psychologist, 32,513–531

Bronfenbrenner, U., (1979). The ecology of human development. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bronfenbrenner, U., (1995 b). Developmental ecology through space and time: A future perspective. In Moen, P., Elder Jr. G. H., and Luscher, K.,(Eds.), Examining lives in context: Perspectives on the ecology of human development (pp. 617–649). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Bronfenbrenner, U., (1999). Environments in developmental perspective: Theoretical and operational models. In S. L. Friedman and T. D. Wachs (Eds.), Measuring environment across the lifespan: Emerging methods and concepts (pp. 3–28). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association Press.

Bronfenbrenner, U., (2005). The bioecological theory of human development. In U. Bronfenbrenner (Ed.), Making human beings human (pp. 3–15). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Bronfenbrenner, U., and Morris, P. A., (2006). The bioecological model of human development. In Lerner, R. M., and Damon, W., (Eds.), Handbook of child psychology: Theoretical models of human development (pp. 793–828). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. https://DOI.org/10.1002/ 9780470147658.chpsy0114.

Brooks, R., Te Rile, K., and Maguire, M., (2014) Ethics and Education Research, Bera, Sage, London.

Braun, V., and Clarke, V., (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3 (2). pp. 77-101. ISSN 1478-0887 Available from: <http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/11735>.

Britto, P. R., Ponguta, A. L., Reyes, C., and Karnat, R., (2015). A systematic review of parenting programmes for young children. Retrieved April 1, 2019, from <https://www.unicef.org/earlychildhood/files/P_Shanker_final__Systematic_Review_of_Parenting_ECD_Dec_15_copy.pdf>

British Educational Research Association, (2018) Ethical guidelines for educational research. London: BERA. Available from: https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethicalguidelines-for-educational-research-2018 [Accessed 15 July 2019.

British Educational Research Association, (2019) Ethical Guidelines for Educational research, fourth edition available from: [Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, fourth edition (2018) | BERA](https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018-online) accessed 21-5-2020.

Brown, S., and Loh, C., (2002). Hong Kong: the political economy of land. Hong Kong, Civic Exchange.

Brownlee, J., and Chak, A. W. S., (2007). Hong Kong student teachers’ beliefs about children’s learning: Influences of a cross-cultural early childhood teaching experience. Australian Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology, 7, 11–21.

Bryman, A., (2008). Social research methods. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Bryman, A., (2016) Social research methods (5th Ed) Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Brookfield, S., (2017) Becoming a Critical Reflective Teacher. Somerset John Wiley and Sons, Incorporated 2017.

Burke, P., (2002), Accessing Education, Effectively Widening Participation. Stoke: Trentham books limited.

Business Review at Berkley, (2019) One Country two systems: Political Ingenuity or Politically Ingenuine? 26-11-2019 Available from: [One Country Two Systems: Political Ingenuity or Politically Ingenuine? - Business Review at Berkeley](https://businessreview.berkeley.edu/one_country_two_systems_political-ingenuity-or-politically-ingenuine/) accessed 4-1-2023.

Carpendale, J., Lewis, C., and Muller, U., (2018) The Development of Children’s thinking, its social and communicative Foundations. London, Sage.

[The] Centre for Parenting Education, (online: NP) Building upon families’ strengths and helping parents create a home environment where children can become caring, confident, and responsible available from: <https://centerforparentingeducation.org/> accessed 20-8-2020.

Chan, C., (2001). Promoting learning and understanding through constructivist approaches for Chinese Learners. In D.A. Watkins and J.B. Biggs (Eds.) Teaching the Chinese Learner: Psychological and Pedagogical Perspectives. Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre, and Melbourne, Victoria: The Australian Council for Educational Research.

Chan, L. K. S., and L. Chan., (2002). ‘Reforming Early Childhood Education in Hong Kong: Meeting the Challenges.’ In International Development in Early Childhood Services, edited by Chan, L. K. S., and Mellor, E. J., 81–117. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Chan, Ming K., (1997). The Challenge of Hong Kong's Reintegration with China. Hong Kong University Press. Hong Kong (China). [ISBN](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ISBN_(identifier)) [962-209-441-4](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/962-209-441-4).

Chandler, R., Anstey, E., and Ross, H., (2015) Listening to Voices and Visualizing Data in Qualitative Research: Hyper modal Dissemination Possibilities. SAGE Open, DOI: 10.1177/2158244015592166, April-June 2015:1–8.

Chan, K. S., and Chan, L., (2003) Early Childhood Education in Hong Kong and its challenges. Early Child Development and Care, 173(1), 7-17.

Chan, K. W., and Elliott, R. G., (2004). Epistemological beliefs across cultures: Critique and analysis of beliefs structure studies. Educational Psychology, 24: 123–142.

Chan, B., Lee, M., and Choy, G., (2009) Competing forces: government policy, teacher education, and school administration in Hong Kong early childhood education. International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy, 3(1), 75-86.

Chan, C., and Rao, N., (2010). Revisiting the Chinese Learner: Changing Contexts, Changing Education. 10.1007/978-90-481-3840-1.

Chan, C. W., (2020). Moral education in Hong Kong kindergartens: An analysis of the preschool curriculum guides. Global Studies of Childhood, 10(2), 156-169. [https://DOI.org/10.1177/2043610619885385](https://doi.org/10.1177/2043610619885385).

Chao, R. K., (2001). Extending research on the consequences of parenting style for Chinese Americans and European Americans**.**Child Development**,**72, 1832-1843.

Chao, R. K., Aque, C., (2009). Interpretations of parental control by Asian immigrant and European American youth. Journal of Family Psychology, 23, 342-354.

Chao, R., and Tseng, V., (2002) Parenting of Asians M.H. Bornstein (Ed.), Handbook of parenting, social conditions and applied parenting, Vol. 4, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ (2002), pp. 59-93.

Cheah, C. S. L., and Rubin, K. H., (2003) European American and mainland Chinese Mothers’ socialization beliefs regarding pre-schoolers’ social skills Parenting: science and Practice, 31-22.

Chen, J. J., Li, H., and Wang, J. Y., (2017) Implementing the project approach: a case study of hybrid pedagogy in a Hong Kong kindergarten. Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 31(3), 324-41.

Chen, Y. J., and McCollum, J. A., (2000). Taiwanese mothers’ perceptions of the relationship between interactions with their infants and the development of social competence. Early Child Development and Care, 162, 25–40.

Chen X., Bian Y., Xin T., Wang L., Silbereisen, R. K., (2010). Perceived social change and childrearing attitudes in China. Eur. Psychol. 15 260–270. 10.1027/1016-9040/a000060.

Chen, X., Rubin, K. H., and Li, Z. Y., (1995). Social functioning and adjustment in Chinese children: A longitudinal study. Developmental Psychology, 31(4), 531–539.

Chen, X., Hastings, P. D., Rubin, K. H., Chen, H., Cen, G., and Stewart, S. L., (1998). Child-rearing attitudes and behavioural inhibition in Chinese and Canadian toddlers: Across-cultural study. Developmental Psychology, 34(4), 677–686.

Chen, S. X., Bond, M. H., and Tang, D., (2007). Decomposing filial piety into filial attitudes and filial enactments. Asian Journal of Social Psychology, 10(4), 213–223.

Chen, J. J., Li, H., and Wang, J. Y., (2017) Implementing the Project Approach: A Case Study of Hybrid Pedagogy in a Hong Kong Kindergarten, Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 31:3, 324-341, DOI: [10.1080/02568543.2017.1309479](https://doi-org.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/02568543.2017.1309479).

Chen, W.W., (2017) The relations between perceived parenting styles and academic achievement in Hong Kong: The mediating role of students' goal orientations. Science direct, Journal of Learning and Individual Differences volume 37 pages 48-54 https://DOI.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2014.11.021.

Cheng, R. H. M., (2004) Moral education in Hong Kong: Confucian-parental, Christian-religious and liberal-civic influences. Journal of Moral Education, Volume 33, No 4 December 2004.

Cheng, D. P. W., Reunamo, J., Cooper, P., Liu, K., and Vong, K. I. P., (2015) Children’s agentive orientations in play-based and academically focused preschools in Hong Kong. Early Childhood Development and Care, 185(11-12), 1828-44.

Cheng, D. P. W., (2006). The translation of western teaching approaches in the Hong Kong early childhood curriculum: A promise for effective teaching? Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 7(3), 228–237. DOI: 10.2304/ciec.2006.7.3.228.

Cherry, K., (2022) What Is Sociocultural Theory? Developmental Psychology, available from: [Sociocultural Theory: Understanding Vygotsky's Theory (verywellmind.com)](https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-sociocultural-theory-2795088) accessed 20-3-23.

Cheung, A., Keung, C., and Tam, W., Understanding Hong Kong Pre-primary School Teachers’ Curriculum Beliefs: A Modified Version of the Curriculum Orientation Inventory. Early Childhood Education Journal **50**, 959–968 (2022). https://DOI-org.hull.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/s10643-021-01211-3.

Cheung, W.Y., (2009) [Winning at the Starting Line?] [Television series episode, in Cantonese].’ In Hong Kong Connection, edited by Y. T. Siu, and production assistant/producer. Hong Kong: RTHK.

Cheung, S. K., Ling, E. K., and Leung, S. K. Y., (2017) Beliefs associated with support for child-centred learning environment among Hong Kong pre-service early childhood teachers. Journal of Education for Teaching, 43(2), 232-44.

Cheung, E., (22 January 2020). [‘China coronavirus: death toll almost doubles in one day as Hong Kong reports its first two cases’](https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/health-environment/article/3047193/china-coronavirus-first-case-confirmed-hong-kong). [South China Morning Post](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_China_Morning_Post). [Archived](https://web.archive.org/web/20200322000317/https:/www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/health-environment/article/3047193/china-coronavirus-first-case-confirmed-hong-kong) from the original on 22 March 2020. accessed 29-5-23.

Cheung, H., and Hughes, R., (May 2020) ‘Why are there protests in Hong Kong? All the context you need’ available from:

[https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-48607723 accessed 9-11-2020](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-48607723%20accessed%209-11-2020).

Cheung, G., (30 January 2019). [‘Beijing rejects Hong Kong leader's plan to strengthen anti-corruption laws that would target gifts for the chief executive’](https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/2184174/beijing-says-no-hong-kong-leaders-plan-strengthen-citys). South China Morning Post.

Cheung, C., (2023) Decoding the vibrant work culture in Hong Kong, Insights and trends available from: <https://nnroad.com/blog/work-culture-in-hong-kong/> accessed 15-11-2023.

Chong, W., (2012). Pledged on free kindy education. Resource document. The Standard. http://www.thestandard.com.

hk/news\_detail.asp?pp\_cat=30andart\_id=128262andsid=38201101andcon\_type=1. Accessed July 2019.

Chow, N.W.S., (2001). The practice of filial piety among the Chinese in Hong Kong. In Chi, I., Chappell, N. and Lubben, J. (Eds.). Elderly Chinese in Pacific Rim Countries, pp. 125-136. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press

Chow, Nelson and Lum, Terry., (2008) Trends in family Attitudes and Values in Hong Kong available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237336770\_Trends\_in\_Family\_Attitudes\_and\_Values\_in\_Hong\_Kong accessed 13-7-2020.

Chua, A., (2011). Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother. New York: Penguin Press.

Clough, N., and Holden, C., (eds) (1998) Children as citizens: Education for Participation, London: Jessica Kingsley.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., and Morrison, K., (2007) Research methods in Education. 6th edition. Abingdon, Routledge.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., and Morrison, K., (2011) Research methods in Education 7th edition. Abingdon, Routledge.

Collins, H., (2010) Creative Research: The Theory and Practice of Research for the Creative Industries. AVA Publications.

Committee on Free Kindergarten Education (2015) Children First Right Start for All: report of the Committee on free Kindergarten Education. Hong Kong: work case studies of 15-year free education in Greater China. International Journal of Chinese Education, 3(2), 161-170.

Cormier, G., (2018) The language variable in educational research: an exploration of researcher positionality, translation, and interpretation, International Journal of Research and Method in Education, 41:3, 328-341, DOI: 10.1080/1743727X.2017.1307335.

Cortazzi, M., Pilcher, N., and Jin, L., (2011). ‘Language Choices and ‘Blind Shadows’: Investigating Interviews with Chinese Participants.’ Qualitative Research 11 (5): 505–535. DOI: 10.1177/1468794111413225.

Cresswell, J. W., and Plano Clark, V. l., (2007) Designing and conducting Mixed Method Research. Sage Publications, London.

Creswell, J. W., and Plano Clark, V. L., (2018). Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research

(3rd ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE.

Cui, C., and Xie, X., A comparison of the parental values of children's extracurricular music learning

in Guilin, China and in Tampa, United States. Front Psychol. 2024 Jan 30;15:1275734.

DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1275734. PMID: 38356777; PMCID: PMC10865502.

Cunningham, D., (2020) Professional and Ethical Consideration for early Childhood Leaders.

IGI Global, London.

Curriculum Development Council, (2006) Guide to the pre-primary curriculum. Hong Kong, Hong Kong Government Printer.

Curriculum Development Council, (2007/2014). Liberal studies curriculum guidelines. Hong Kong: Education Bureau

Curriculum Development Council, (2017) Kindergarten education curriculum guide – joyful learning through play, balanced development all the way. Hong Kong, Hong Kong Government Printer.

Curtis, W., Murphy, M., and Shields, S., (2014) Research and Education Routledge, Oxon.

Dahlia, K., Remler, and Gregg, G., Van Ryzin. (2014) Research Methods in Practice: Strategies for Description and Causation, London: Sage

Daniels, R. J., and Trebilcock, M. J., 2005. Rethinking the Welfare State: The Prospects for Government by Voucher. Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Routledge.

Davis, H., (2019) Hong Kong Kindergartens explained: are they the root of city’s education ills? Date published 6-4-2019, South China Morning Post, accessed 2-2-22 available from: [Hong Kong kindergartens explained: are they the root of city’s education ills? | South China Morning Post (scmp.com)](https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/education/article/3004864/hong-kong-kindergartens-explained-are-they-root-citys).

Dean, J., Furness, P., Verrier, D., Lennon, H., Bennett, C., and Spencer, S., (2018). Desert island data: an investigation into researcher positionality. Qualitative Research, 18(3), 273–289. [https://DOI.org/10.1177/1468794117714612](https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794117714612).

Denham, S., and Kochanoff, A. T., (2002). Parental contributions to preschoolers’ understanding of emotion. Marriage and Family Review, 34(3-4), 311–343.

Denham, S. A., Mitchell-Copeland, J., Strandberg, K., Auerbach, S., and Blair, K., (1997). Parental contributions to preschoolers’ emotional competence: direct and indirect effects. Motivation and Emotion, 21(1), 65–86.

Denscombe, M., (2010) The good research guide. 4th edition. Berkshire, Open University Press.

Denscombe, M., (2017) The good research guide: for small-scale social research projects (6th Ed.) London: Open University Press.

Denzin, N.K., (2001) Interpretive interactionism 2nd Ed, Applied social research Methods series, Volume 16, London, Sage.

Denzin, N.K., and Lincoln, Y, S., (2000) The discipline and practice of qualitative research, Handbook of qualitative research second ed. Sage, London.

3.10 Foundation Stage. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2 (Accessed: 12 May 2020).

Department for Education, (2019) Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage available from: <https://foundationyears.org.uk/2019/08/eyfspolicy/> accessed 9-11-2020.

Dewey, J., 1986. ‘Experience and Education. ‘The Educational Forum’ 50: 241–252. DOI: 10.1080/00131728609335764.

Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., and Christian, L. M., (2008). Internet, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys, The Tailored Design Method. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.

Dudovskiy, J., (2018) The Ultimate Guide to Writing a Dissertation in Business Studies: A Step-by-Step Assistance, e-book, available from <https://research-methodology.net/about-us/ebook/> accessed 10-12-2019.

Dulay, K. M., Tong, X., Mc Bride, C., (2016) The Role of Foreign Domestic Helpers in Hong Kong Chinese Children’s English and Chinese Skills: A Longitudinal Study available from: [https://DOI.org/10.1111/lang.12222](https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12222) accessed 20-5-2023.

Education and Manpower Bureau. 2006 a. ‘Legislative Council Panel on Education Paper for Discussion: New Initiatives in Pre-primary Education.’ (LC Paper No. CB (2)277/06-07(01)). <https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/preprimaryvoucher/ed1113cb2-277-1-e.pdf>.

Education Bureau (EDB). (2016). Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres and Schools with Kindergarten Classes -for action; and (b) Heads of Sections -for information.]. In edb.gov.hk (pp. 5–45). <https://applications.edb.gov.hk/circular/upload/EDBC/EDBC16007E.pdf>.

Education Bureau. 2016 a. ‘Free Quality Kindergarten Education.’ (Education Bureau Circular No. 7/2016). <http://applications.edb.gov.hk/circular/upload/EDBC/EDBC16007E.pdf>.

Education Bureau (EDB) (2019) About EDB, available from: [https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/overview/index.html accessed July 2019](https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/overview/index.html%20accessed%20July%202019).

Education Bureau (EDB) (2022) Guidelines on Teachers’ Professional Conduct, available from: [guidelines\_en.pdf (edb.gov.hk)](https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/teacher/guidelines_tpc/guidelines_en.pdf) accessed 12-11-23.

Education Commission (2000) Learning for life, learning through life: reform proposals for the education system in Hong Kong. Hong Kong: Government printer.

Edwards, R., and Mauthner, M., (2012) Ethics and feminist research: Theory and Practice, In Miller, T., Birch, M., Mauthner, M., and Jessop, J. Ethics in qualitative research (pp. 14-28). London: SAGE Publications Ltd DOI: 10.4135/9781473913912.

Edwards, C., Gandini, L., and Forman, G., (2012) The hundred languages of children: the Reggio Emilia experience in transformation. Oxford, Praeger.

Edward, T., (1871) Primitive Culture. Vol 1. New York: J.P. Putnam’s son.

Elliot, J., (2005) using narrative in social research: Qualitative and Quantitative approaches. London: Sage.

Eren, A., and Çetin, G., (2019). Pre-service teachers’ beliefs about the teaching profession, curriculum orientations, and personal responsibility. Curriculum Perspectives, 39, 19–32. [https://DOI-org.hull.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/s41297-018-00061-1](https://doi-org.hull.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/s41297-018-00061-1).

Ethics Sage, (2018), What are Values available from: https://www.ethicssage.com/2018/08/what-are-values.html accessed 29-5-2024

Ethics Unwrapped, (2024) Values available from https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/glossary/values accessed 29-5-2024.

Feinberg, W., and Lubienski, C., (2008). Introduction. In Feinberg W., and Lubienski C., (Eds.), School choice policies and outcomes: Empirical and philosophical perspectives (pp. 1- 20). New York, NY: State University of New York Press.

Fontana, A., and Frey, J.H. (1994) interviewing the art of science, in NK Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln(eds) Handbook of qualitative research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage PP 361-76.

Fiske, A., (2002) Psychological Bulletin, 00332909, 20020101, Vol. 128, Issue 1: Using individualism and collectivism to compare cultures--A critique of the validity and measurement of the constructs: Comment on Oyserman, et al., (2002).

Forestier, K., and Crossley, M., (2015) International education policy transfer – borrowing both ways: the Hong Kong and England experience. Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 45(5), 664-85.

Fung, C. K. H., (2007). Practice-expectation gap and the pedagogical decision-making of teachers in the pre-primary sector in Hong Kong. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong.

Fung, C. K.-H., and -C.-C. Lam., (2009). ‘The Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme of Hong Kong: A Promise of Quality Education Provision?’ Education Journal 36 (1/2): 153–170.

Fung, J., Kim, J. J., Jin, J., Wu, Q., Fang, C., and Lau, A. S., (2017). Perceived Social Change, Parental Control, and Family Relations: A Comparison of Chinese Families in Hong Kong, Mainland China, and the United States. Frontiers in psychology, 8, 1671. https://DOI.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01671.

Gair, S., (2012). ‘Feeling Their Stories Contemplating Empathy, Insider/Outsider Positionings, and Enriching Qualitative Research.’ Qualitative Health Research 22 (1): 134–143. DOI: 10.1177/1049732311420580.

Galletta, A., (2016). Mastering the semi-structured interview and beyond: from research design to analysis and publication. New York university press, New York [https://DOI.org/10.18574/nyu/9780814732939.001.0001](https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9780814732939.001.0001).

Garhart Mooney, C., (2013) An introduction to Dewey, Montessori, Erikson, Piaget, and Vygotsky. 2nd edition. New York, Redleaf Press.

Gaunt, C., (2022) Nursery world, Row breaks out between critics of the revised early years curriculum and DfE available from: [Row breaks out between critics of the revised early years curriculum and DfE | Nursery World](https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/news/article/row-breaks-out-between-critics-of-the-revised-early-years-curriculum-and-dfe) accessed 3-10-22.

Geertz, C., (2017) The interpretation of Cultures, Basic books, New York.

Geneser, V., in Sluss, D., J., (2019) Supporting play in Early Childhood, 3rd edn, London: Cengage.

Ghiara, V., (2020). Disambiguating the role of paradigms in mixed methods research. Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 14 (1), 11-25.

Gilbert, N., (2008 a) Research, theory, and method, in Gilbert, N. (ed.), Research Social life. 3rd edn. London: Sage.

Gill, F. J, Leslie, G.D., Grech, C., Latour, J. M., (2013), Using a web-based survey tool to undertake a Delphi study: Application for nurse education research ,Nurse Education Today, Volume 33, Issue 11,2013, Pages 1322-1328, ISSN 0260-6917, [https://DOI.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2013.02.016](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2013.02.016).

Given, L. M., (Ed.), The SAGE Encyclopaedia of Qualitative Research Methods (Vols. 1 and 2). Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA.

Gouveia, V. V., Vione, K. C., Milfont, T. L., and Fischer, R. (2015). Patterns of Value Change During the Life Span: Some Evidence from a Functional Approach to Values. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 41(9), 1276–1290. [https://DOI.org/10.1177/0146167215594189](https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167215594189).

Goodnow, J. J., (2002). Adding culture to studies of development: Toward changes in procedure and theory. Human Development, 45, 237-245.

Goldkuhl, G., (2012). Pragmatism vs interpretivism in qualitative information systems research European Journal of Information Systems, suppl. Special Issue: Qualitative Research Methods; Abingdon Vol. 21, Iss. 2, (Mar 2012): 135-146. DOI: 10.1057/ejis.2011.54.

Gonzalez, N., Moll, L. C., and Amanti, C., (2009). Funds of knowledge: theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms. Mahwah, New Jersey Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=255629>.

Gray, C., and Mac Blain, S., (2015) Learning Theories in Childhood. 2nd Ed, Sage. London.

Gray, M. R., and Steinberg, L., (1999). Unpacking authoritative parenting: Reassessing a multidimensional construct. **Journal of Marriage and Family**, **61**, 547-587.

Greenfield P. M., (2009). Linking social change and developmental change: shifting pathways of human development. Dev. Psychol. 45 401–418. 10.1037/a0014726.

Gubrium, J. F., (2012). The Sage handbook of interview research: the complexity of the craft, 2nd Ed, London, Sage.

Hall, E., and Wall, K., (2019) Research methods for understanding professional learning. London: Bloomsbury.

Halstead, M., and Taylor, M.J., Eds (1996) Values in Education and Education in Values, London, Falmer press.

Halstead J. M., Taylor M. J., (2000). Learning and teaching about values: A review of recent research. Cambridge Journal of Education, 30(2), 169–202. [https://DOI-org.hull.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/713657146](https://doi-org.hull.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/713657146)

Hamilton, L., and Corbett-Whittier, C., (2013) Using case study in education research. London, Sage.

Hammersley, M., and Atkinson, P., (1995) Ethnography principles in practice, 2nd Ed, London, Routledge.

Hammersley, M., and Traianou, A., (2012) Ethics in qualitative research, controversies, and contexts. London, Sage.

Hartas, D., (2010) Educational Research and Inquiry Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. London. Continuum international Publishing Group.

Hartman, R.S., (2011) The structure of value: foundations of scientific axiology. Oregon, Wipf and Stock Publishers.

Heckman, J., 2006. ‘Skill Formation and the Economics of Investing in Disadvantaged Children’ Science 312: 1900–1902.

Heckman, J. J., and Masterov, D. V., (2007) ‘The Productivity Argument for Investing in Young Children.’ Review of Agricultural Economics 29 (3): 446–493. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467- 9353.2007.00359.x.

Heng, M., (2017) Not fully Chinese? Hong Kong people have a fluid identity – and politics has nothing to do with it, South China Morning Post, published 3-1-2017 available from: [https://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/2058855/not-fully-chinese-hong-kong-people-have-fluid-identity-and accessed 3-12-2019](https://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/2058855/not-fully-chinese-hong-kong-people-have-fluid-identity-and%20accessed%203-12-2019).

Hennink, M., Hutter, I., and Bailey, A., (2011) Qualitative Research Methods.London, Sage.

Hirose, I., and Olson, J., (Ed) (2018) The Oxford Handbook of Value theory, (place of publication not identified) Oxford, University press.

Ho, D. Y. F., (1986). Chinese pattern of socialization: a critical review. In M. H. Bond (Ed.), The psychology of the Chinese people (pp. 1–37). Hong Kong, China: Oxford University Press.

Ho, J., (2015). Curriculum and pedagogical practices in four Hong Kong kindergartens. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Queensland University of Technology, Australia.

Hofstede, G., (2001) Cultures Consequences, comparing Values, Behaviours, Institutions, and organisations across nations (Sec Ed) Sage publications, London.

Hofstede, G., and Hofstede, G.J., (2005) Cultures and organisations: software of the mind. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Hogan, D., (2014) Why is Singapore’s school system so successful, and is it a Model for the West? Available from: <http://theconversation.com/why-is-singapores-school-system-so-successful-and-is-it-a-model-for-the-west-accessed> 25-7-2019.

Holstein, J. A., and Gubrium, J. F., (2003). Inside interviewing: new lenses, new concerns. Thousand Oaks Calif, Sage Publications.

Holt, N., (2007) Bringing the high/scope approach to your early years practice. New York, Routledge.

Hollingsworth, J., (November 2019) ‘Schools shut, riot police out as Hong Kong sees yet another day of unrest’. Available from: <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/11/11/asia/hong-kong-protests-dramatic-intl-hnk/index.html> accessed 9-11-2020

Hong Kong Bill Of Rights Ordinance, (1991) available from [Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance (elegislation.gov.hk)](https://www.elegislation.gov.hk/hk/cap383!en.pdf) accessed 5-4-23.

Hong Kong Free Press, (January 2020) ‘First case of SARS-like virus in Hong Kong’ available from: <https://hongkongfp.com/2020/01/22/breaking-first-case-sars-like-virus-hong-kong-source/> accessed 9-11-2020.

Hong Kong Government News, (2017) Kindergarten guide introduced. Available from: http://www.news.gov.hk/en/categories/school\_work/html/2017/02/20170227\_153146.shtml [Accessed 4-2-2021].

House, E. R., and Howe, K. R., (1999). Values in evaluation and social research. Thousand Oaks, Calif, SAGE.

Hughes, P., (2001 a) Paradigms, methods, and knowledge. In Mc Naughton, G., Rolfe, S. and Siraj-Blatchford, I. (eds) Doing Early Childhood Research: International Perspectives on Theory and Practice. Maidenhead: Open University press.

Huysman, M., and De Wit, D., (2000) Knowledge is sharing in practice. Kluwer academic publishers, Dordrecht.

Huld, A., (2022) Hong Kong’s Education market- trends and opportunities. Available from [Hong Kong's Education Market - Trends and Opportunities (china-briefing.com)](https://www.china-briefing.com/news/hong-kongs-education-market-trends-and-opportunities/#Trends%20and%20Opportunities%20in%20Hong%20Kong%E2%80%99s%20Education%20Market) accessed 4-4-2023.

Humpage., (2021) Navigating a complex pedagogical landscape: case study of a progressive early year’s model in Hong Kong. University of Sheffield, Thesis.

Immigration Advisers Authority, (2023), Personal beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviour, online, available from: <https://www.iaa.govt.nz/for-advisers/adviser-tools/ethics-toolkit/personal-beliefs-values-attitudes-and-behaviour/#:~:text=A%20belief%20will%20develop%20into,wealth%2C%20career%20success%20or%20family.accessed> 12-11-2023.

Inglehart, R., and Baker, W.L., (2000) Modernization, Cultural change, and the persistence of traditional values.AM Social Rev. page 19-51.

Isaacs, B., (20018) Understanding the Montessori approach, 2nd ed, Fulton, London

Jackson, A. Y., and Mazzei, L.A., (2009) Voice in Qualitative Inquiry, Routledge, London.

Jensen, B., (2013), Catching up: learning from the best school systems in East Asia available from: <https://grattan.edu.au/report/catching-up-learning-from-the-best-school-systems-in-east-asia/> accessed 27-7-2019

Johansson, E., and Einarsdottir, J., (2018) Values in Early Childhood Education, citizenship for tomorrow. London, Routledge.

Johnson, B., And Christensen, L., (2008) Educational research. 3edn. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Jose, P.E., Huntsinger, C. S., Huntsinger, P. R., and Liaw, F. R., (2000) Parental Values and Practices Relevant to Young Children’s Social Development in Taiwan and the United States. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology 31.6 (2000): 677-702.

Kahlenberg, R. D., (2003). Public school choice: Student achievement, integration, democracy, and public support. In R. D. Kahlenberg (Ed.), Public school choice vs. private school vouchers (pp. 137-152). New York, NY: The Century Foundation Press. Lam, C. C., Ho, E., and Wong, N. Y., (2002). Parents’ beliefs and practices in education in Confucian heritage cultures: The Hong Kong case. Journal of Southeast Asian Education, 3(1), 99- 114.

Kaufer, S., and Chemero, A., (2015) Phenomenology an Introduction. Malden USA, Polity press.

Keller, H., Papaligoura, Z., Kuensemueller, V., Papaeliou, C., Lohaus, A., (2003). Concepts of mother–infant interaction in Greece and Germany. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 34, 677-689.

Kewalramani, S.; Philipson, S.; Belford, N., How Parents Engaged and Inspired Their Young Children to Learn Science in the Later Years: A Story of 11 Immigrant Parents in Australia. Research in Science Education, [s. l.], v. 52, n. 1, p. 45–60, 2022. DOI 10.1007/s11165-020-09919-9.

Kim, Y. H., Chiu, C. Y., Peng, S., Cai, H., and Tov, W., (2010) Explaining East-West differences in the likelihood of making favourable self-evaluations: The role of evaluation apprehension and directness expression. Journal of Cross0 Cultural Psychology, 41(1),62-75.

Kim, H. W., (2012). ‘Research with Children: Challenges and Dilemmas as an Insider Researcher.’ Early Child Development and Care 182 (2): 263–276. DOI: 10.1080/03004430.2011.555818.

Kim, K., Rohner, R. P., (2002). Parental warmth, control, and involvement in schooling predicting academic achievement among Korean American adolescents. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 33, 127-140.

Kincheloe, J. L., (2003). Teachers as researchers. Qualitative inquiry as a path to empowerment. London and New York: Routledge, Taylor, and Francis Group.

King, N., Horrocks, C., and Brooks, J. M., (2019). Interviews in qualitative research Sage publishing, Los Angeles

King, N., (2004) Using templates in the thematic analysis of text. In Cassel, C., Symon, G. (Eds), Essential guide to qualitative methods in organisational research (pp. 257-270) London, UK, Sage.

Kirchenbaum, H., (2013) The Value Clarification in counselling and psychotherapy. Oxford, Oxford university press.

Klenke, K., (2008) qualitative research in the study of leadership. Emeral group Publishing Limited, Bingley.

Koselleck, R., 1990. Sprogændring og begivenhedshistorie [Language change and history of events]. Den Jyske historiker 50: 121–35.

Kozulin, A., Gindis, B., Ageyev, V., and Miller, S.M., (2003) Vygotsky’s Educational theory in Cultural Context. Cambridge UK, Cambridge University press.

Kraatz, M. S., Flores, R., and Chandler, D., (2020). The value of values for institutional analysis. Academy of Management Annals, 14(2), 474–512.

Kuo, L., (2014) How Hong Kong’s maid trade is making life worse for domestic workers throughout Asia. Available form: <http://qz.com/176354/how-hong-kong-maid-trade-is-making-life-worse-for-domestic-workers-throughout-asia/> accesses 22-5-2023.

La Foret, D.R., and Mendez, J. L., (2016) Play beliefs and responsive parenting among low-income mothers of pre-schoolers in the United States

Early Child Development and Care, 187 (8) (2016), pp. 1359-1371.

Lai A.C., Zhang Z. X., Wang W. Z., (2000). Maternal child-rearing practices in Hong Kong and Beijing Chinese families: a comparative study. Int. J. Psychol. 35 60–66. 10.1080/002075900399529.

Lam, S., (29-May-2018) South China Morning News, Drill or chill: How to prepare for a kindergarten interview available from: [https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/education/article/2148128/drill-or-chill-how-prepare-kindergarten-interview?module=inlineandpgtype=article](https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/education/article/2148128/drill-or-chill-how-prepare-kindergarten-interview?module=inline&pgtype=article) accessed 1-6-2023.

Lamborn S. D., Dornbusch S. M., Steinberg L., (1996). Ethnicity and community context as moderators of the relations between family decision making and adolescent adjustment. Child Development, 67, 283-301.

Lau A. S., (2010). Physical discipline in Chinese American immigrant families: an adaptive culture perspective. Culture. Divers. Ethnic Minor. Psychol. 16 313–322. 10.1037/ a 0018667.

Lau, G., (2012) From China to Hong Kong: a reflection on the impact of the educational reform in the Deweyan perspective on Early Childhood Education in the land of the dragon. International Journal of Educational Reform, 21(1), 2-23.

Lavrakas, P.J., (2008) Encyclopaedia of Survey research Methods, London, Sage.

Lawson, M.A., 2003. School–family relations in context. Parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement. Urban Education 38, no. 1: 77–133.

Leadsom, A., Field, F., Burstow, P., and Lucas, C., (2014). The 1001 critical days: The importance of the conception to age two period. Retrieved April 1, 2019, from <https://www.1001criticaldays.co.uk/sites/default/files/1001> days\_Nov15%2800000002%29.pdf.

Lee, J. C. K., (2000), Teacher receptivity to curriculum change in the implementation stage: the case of environmental education in Hong Kong. Journal of Curriculum Studies, VOL. 32, NO. 1, 95- 115.

Lee, W. O., (1996). ‘The cultural concept for Chinese learners: Conceptions of learning in the Confucian tradition.’ In The Chinese learner: Cultural psychological and contextual influences, Edited by: Watkins, D. A. and Biggs, J. B. 25–41. Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre, The University of Hong Kong, and Australian Council for Educational Research.

Lee, I. F., (2014). Contemporary Childhoods in Asia: Becoming (Pre)School Students in Hong Kong. Global Studies of Childhood, 4(3), 157–168. [https://DOI.org/10.2304/gsch.2014.4.3.157](https://doi.org/10.2304/gsch.2014.4.3.157).

Lee, J., Yu, H., and Choi, S., (2012). The influences of parental acceptance and parental control on school adjustment and academic achievement for South Korean children: The mediation role of self-regulation. Asia Pacific Education Review, 13(2), 227–237.

Lewellyn, S. J., (1982) a perspective on education in Hong Kong: report by a visiting panel. Hong Kong: Government printer.

Leung, K., Lau, S., Lam, W.L., (1998) Parenting styles and academic achievement: A cross-cultural study, Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 44 (2) (1998), pp. 157-172.

Leung, C., and Karnilowicz, W., (2009) ‘The adaptation of Chinese adolescents in two societies: A comparison of Chinese adolescents in Hong Kong and Australia’, International journal of psychology, 44(3), pp. 170–178. DOI: 10.1080/00207590701656150.

Leung, Maggi W. H., (2015). ‘Talk to her, she is also Chinese’: A reflection on the spatial-temporal reach of co-ethnicity in migration research. Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative

Social Research, 16(2), Art. 13, <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1502130>.

Lubienski, C., (2008). The politics of parental choice: Theory and evidence on quality information. In Feinberg W., and Lubienski. C., (Eds.), School choice policies and outcomes: Empirical and philosophical perspectives (pp. 99-119). New York, NY: State University of New York Press.

Ludo, R., Tamils-Le Monda, C. S., and Song, L., (2013) Chinese parents’ goals and practices in early childhood, Early Childhood Research Quarterly 28 (pp 843-857) Elsevier, New York. [https://DOI.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2013.08.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2013.08.001).

Leung, C. H., (2012). Teacher beliefs and practices of kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong. Australasian Journal of Early Childhood, 37(1), 38–54. [https://DOI-org.hull.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/183693911203700106](https://doi-org.hull.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/183693911203700106).

Lunn Brownlee, J., Johannsson, E., Walker, S. and Scholes, L., (2017). Teaching for active citizenship, Personal epistemology, and practices in early education classrooms. New York, Routledge.

Luo, R., Tamis-Le Monda, C. S., and Song, L., (2013) Chinese parents’ goals and practices in early childhood Early Childhood Research Quarterly, Volume 28, Issue 4, 4th Quarter 2013, Pages 843-857.

Li, |. H., (2004) Parental expectations of Chinese immigrants: a Folk theory about children’s school achievement. Race, Ethnicity and education. 7(2). 167-183.

Li, Y., (2012). The negotiated project-based learning: Understanding the views and practice of kindergarten teachers about the implementation of project learning in Hong Kong. Education 3-13: International Journal of Primary, Elementary and Early Years Education, 40(5), 473–486. DOI:10.1080/03004279.2010.544662.

Li, H., Wong, J.M.S., and Wang, X.C., (2010) Affordability, accessibility, and accountability: perceived impacts of the pre-primary education vouchers in Hong Kong. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 25(1), 125-138.

liško, D., Ignatjeva, S., and Mičule, I., (2010) ‘Teachers as Researchers: Bringing Teachers' Voice to the Educational Landscape’ Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability, vol. 12, no. 1, 2010, pp. 51-65. [https://DOI.org/10.2478/v10099-009-0046-x](https://doi.org/10.2478/v10099-009-0046-x).

Littlejohn, S.W., and Foss, K.A., (2009) ‘Encyclopaedia of Communication Theory’ Vol. 1, SAGE Publication.

Long, H., and Pang. W., (2016). ‘Family Socioeconomic Status, Parental Expectations, and Adolescents’ Academic Achievements: A Case of China.’ Educational Research and Evaluation 22 (5–6): 283–304. DOI: 10.1080/13803611.2016.1237369.

Louie, V., (2001) Parents’ aspirations and investment: the role of social class in the educational experiences of 1-5- and second-generation Chinese Americans. Harvard Educational review 71(3), 438-474.

MA, H., (2016). Urban politics and cultural capital: the case of Chinese opera. Oxon, Taylor Francis.

Maizland, L., (2022) Hong Kong’s freedoms: What China promised and how it is cracking down. Available from: [Hong Kong’s Freedoms: What China Promised and How It’s Cracking Down | Council on Foreign Relations (cfr.org)](https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/hong-kong-freedoms-democracy-protests-china-crackdown) accessed 5-10-2023.

Manen, M., (2016), Phenomenology of Practice, Meaning-Giving Methods in Phenomenological Research and Writing. London, Routledge.

Markova, I., (2017) Effects of academic and non-academic instructional approaches on preschool English language learners’ classroom engagement and English language development. Journal of Early Childhood Research 2017, Vol. 15(4) 339–358.

Markus, H., and Kitayama, S., (2009). Cultures and selves: A cycle if mutual constitution. Perspectives on Psychological Science, 5, 420–430.

Marmion, S., Maeve, W., and Calver, K., (2010) Heritage, what do you mean by heritage? Available from [Download citation of Heritage? What do you mean by heritage (researchgate.net)](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272474922_Heritage_What_do_you_mean_by_heritage/citation/download) accessed 1-3-2023.

Martin, J., and Vincent. C., 1999. Parental voice: An exploration. International Studies in Sociology of Education 9, no. 2: 133–54.

Maxwell, J. A., (2013) Qualitative research design, an interactive approach 3rd Ed, London, Sage.

May, T., (2011) Social research: issues, methods, and process. 4th edition. Berkshire, Open University Press.

Mc Collum, J. A., and Chen, Y. J., (2001). Maternal roles and social competence: Parent–infant interactions in two cultures. Early Child Development and Care,166(1), 119–133.

Mc Crudden, M., Marchand, G., and Schurtz, P.A., (2019). Mixed Methods in Educational Psychology Enquiry. Contemporary Educational Psychology, 57, 1-8.

McClelland, G. H., (2014). Nasty data: Unruly, ill-mannered observations can ruin your analysis. University of Colorado Boulder.

McMullen, M., Elicker, J., Wang, J., Erdiller, Z., Lee, S. M., (2005). Comparing beliefs about appropriate practice among Early Childhood Education and care professionals from the U.S., China, Taiwan, Korea and Turkey. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 20, 451–464. [https://DOI-org.hull.idm.oclc.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2005.10.005](https://doi-org.hull.idm.oclc.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2005.10.005).

Mc Ness, E., Arthur, L., and Crossley, M., (2015) ‘Ethnographic dazzle’ and the construction of the ‘Other’: revisiting dimensions of insider and outsider research for international and comparative education, Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 45:2, 295-316, DOI: 10.1080/03057925.2013.854616.

Meighan, R., and Siraj Blatchford, I., (1997) A Sociology of Educating (3rd Edition) London: Continuum.

Merriam, S.B., (1998). Qualitative research and case study applications in education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Miguel, I., Valentim, J., and Carugati, F., (2013). Social representations of the development of intelligence, parental values, and parenting styles: A theoretical model for analysis. European Journal of Psychology of Education, 28(4), 1163-1180. Retrieved from [http://www.jstor.org.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/stable/23580903 accessed 20-3-2018](http://www.jstor.org.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/stable/23580903%20accessed%2020-3-2018).

Miller, E., and Almon, J., (2009) Crisi in the Kindergarten, why children Need to Play in School. Alliance for Childhood, Maryland USA.

Minaar, L., and Heystek, J., (2013) Online surveys as data collection instruments in education research: a feasible option? South African Journal of Higher Education Volume 27, no 1, pages 162-183.

Ming Sin Wong. J., and Rao, N., (2022) Pursuing quality in Early Childhood Education with a government-regulated voucher: views of parents and service providers in Hong Kong, Journal of Education Policy, 37:1, 39-68, DOI: 10.1080/02680939.2020.1764628.

Mintz, S., (2018) Ethics Sage, What are Values? available from: <https://www.ethicssage.com/2018/08/what-are-values.html> accessed 17-11-2023.

Mok, K. H., (2003). ‘Centralization and Decentralization: Changing Governance in Education.’ In Centralization and Decentralization: Educational Reforms and Changing Governance in Chinese Societies, edited by K. H. Mok, 3–17. Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre, The University of Hong Kong.

Montgomery, C., (2016). Transnational and transcultural positionality in globalised higher education. Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon.

Montessori northwest, What is Montessori education, available from: <https://montessori-nw.org/about-montessori-education#:~:text=Montessori%20is%20a%20method%20of,activities%20to%20guide%20the%20process.accessed> 9-11-2023.

Moran, D., (2000) Introduction to Phenomenology. Oxon, Routledge.

Morgan, W. R., Alwin, D.F., Larry J., and Griffin, L.J., Social Origins, Parental Values, and the Transmission of Inequality, American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 85, No. 1 (Jul. 1979), pp. 156-166. The University of Chicago Press.

Morse, J. M., (1991) Qualitative Nursing Research, a Contemporary Dialogue, Sage Publications, London.

Mukherji, P., and Albon, D., (2011) Research Methods in Early Childhood, an introductory Guide. London. Sage.

Mushro, A., (2022) The 12 Chinese zodiac signs and what they mean available from [Chinese Zodiac Signs: Years and Meanings Explained (today.com)](https://www.today.com/parents/chinese-zodiac-signs-years-meanings-explained-t241535) accessed 1-6-2023.

Myers, M.D., (2008) ‘Qualitative Research in Business and Management’ SAGE Publications.

Myers, M., and Avison, D., (Eds) (2002 b) An introduction to qualitative research in information systems. In Qualitative Research in Information Systems: A Reader. Sage, London.

National Centre on Education and the economy (NCEE) No Date, Top Performing Countries, available from: [Hong Kong - NCEE,](https://ncee.org/country/hong-kong/) accessed 27-05-2022.

Nelson, J. K., (2007). ‘Progressive Education.’ In Early Childhood Education: An International Encyclopaedia, Vol. 3, edited by R. S. New and M. Cochran, 667–669. Westport, CT: Praeger.

New Zealand Ministry of Education, (2017) Te Whariki early childhood curriculum. Available from: <https://www.education.govt.nz/early-childhood/teaching-and-learning/ece> curriculum/te-Whariki/ Accessed 11-07-2023.

Ng, S. S. N., and N. Rao. (2008). ‘Mathematics Teaching during the Early Years in Hong Kong: A Reflection of Constructivism with Chinese Characteristics?’ Early Years 28: 159–172. DOI: 10.1080/09575140802020917.

Ng, N., (2013). ‘Kindergarten Battles: How Far Would You Go to Get a Place?’ CNN World News, October 31. https://edition.cnn.com/2013/10/30/world/asia/hong-kong-kindergartencompetition/index.html.

Nguyen J. D., Kim J. J., Ngo V., Weiss B., Lau A. S., (2017). ’Relations between parent-adolescent acculturation conflict and adolescent mental health symptoms among Vietnamese American families,’ in Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, ed. Lee R., Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Nicolas, A., (2021) Thematic Analysis- A Guide with Examples. Available from: [Thematic Analysis - A Guide with Examples - Research Prospect](https://www.researchprospect.com/thematic-analysis/) accessed 20-9-2023.

Noddings, N., (2013) Caring: A relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education, second Ed, University of California Press, London.

Nowicka, M., and Ryan, L., (2015). Beyond Insiders and Outsiders in Migration Research: Rejecting A Priori Commonalities. Introduction to the FQS Thematic Section on’ Researcher, Migrant, Woman: Methodological Implications of Multiple Positionalities in Migration Studies.’ In Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research (Vol. 16, No. 2). [http://dx.DOI.org/10.17169/fqs-16.2.2342](http://dx.doi.org/10.17169/fqs-16.2.2342).

Nursery world (July 2017) cited Moss, P., (2017) 'Pre-school PISA': sad story of a wasted opportunity. Available from [https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/nursery-world/opinion/1161692/pre-school-PISA-sad-story-of-a-wasted-opportunity. Accessed 11-3-2019](https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/nursery-world/opinion/1161692/pre-school-pisa-sad-story-of-a-wasted-opportunity.%20Accessed%2011-3-2019).

O'Connor, D. E., (2014). Deciphering economics: timely topics explained. Santa Barbara, Calif, Greenwood.

O’Neil, D., ‘Culture and Society.’ Human Culture: What Is Culture?, available from [2: Culture and Meaning - Social Sci Libre Texts](https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Social_Work_and_Human_Services/Human_Behavior_and_the_Social_Environment_II_(Payne)/01%3A_Traditional_Paradigms_and_Dominant_Perspectives_on_Individuals/02%3A_Culture_and_Meaning#:~:text=Culture%20is%20an%20expression%20of%20our%20lives.%20It,we%20are%20and%20influences%20our%20position%20in%20society.) accessed 1-3-23.

Opie, C., (2008) Doing educational research. London, Sage.

Opper, S., (1996). Hong Kong’s Young Children: Their Early Development and Learning. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, (OECD) (2006). Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care. Paris: OECD. available form: <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/37417240.pdf> Accessed November 2018.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, (OECD). (2015). Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care. Paris: OECD Publishing. DOI: 10.1787/9789264233515-en.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, (OECD). (2017). Starting Strong 2017: Key OECD Indicators on Early Childhood Education and Care. Paris: OECD Publishing. DOI: 10.1787/25216031. Opper, S. 1996. Hong Kong’s Young Children.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, (OECD) (2021) PF3.1: Public spending on childcare and early education. Available from: <https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF3_1_Public_spending_on_childcare_and_early_education.pdf> accessed 3-10-22.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, (2018) available from: http://www.oecd.org/PISA/aboutPISA/ accessed 21-2-2019.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2012) Starting strong iii: A Quality Toolbox for Early Childhood Education and Care. Paris: OECD.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, (2019) The International Early Learning and Child Well-being Study - FAQ available from: [http://www.oecd.org/education/school/the-international-early-learning-and-child-well-being-study-faq.htm accessed 14-7-2019](http://www.oecd.org/education/school/the-international-early-learning-and-child-well-being-study-faq.htm%20accessed%2014-7-2019).

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, (2019) Educational outcomes table II.6.50 available from: [http://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?plotter=h5andprimaryCountry=HKGandtreshold=10andtopic=PI](http://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?plotter=h5&primaryCountry=HKG&treshold=10&topic=PI) accessed 14/7/2019.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, (OECD) (2019), Trends Shaping Education (2019), OECD Publishing, Paris. [HTTPS://DOI.org?10.1787/trends-edu-2019-en](https://doi.org?10.1787/trends-edu-2019-en).

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, (OECD) (2022) Trends Shaping Education (2022), OECD Publishing, Paris, [https://DOI.org/10.1787/6ae8771a-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/6ae8771a-en).

Overholt, W. H., (2019) Hong Kong, the rise and fall of ‘one country, two systems’ Harvard Kennedy School, available from <https://ash.harvard.edu/files/ash/files/overholt_hong_kong_paper_final.pdf>, accessed 12-11-2023.

Packzia, A., (2023) Think Bilingual, available from: <https://austin.thinkbilingual.org/the-importance-of-building-a-diverse-community-bilingualism-and-multiculturalism> accessed 29-3-223.

Palaiologou, I., Needham, D., Male, T., (2016) Doing research in Education Theory and Practice London: Sage.

Park, S. Y., and Cheah, C. S.L., (2005), Korean mothers’ proactive socialisation beliefs regarding pre-schooler’s social skills. International Journal of behavioural development, 29, 24-34.

Park, M., and Chesla, C., (2007) Revisiting Confucianism as a conceptual framework for Asian family study. Journal of family study. 13(3).293-311.

Parker, R., Thomsen, B.S., and Berry, A., (2022) Learning Through Play at School – A Framework for Policy and Practice available from:[https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2022.751801/full accessed 9-4-2023](https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2022.751801/full%20accessed%209-4-2023).

Parsons, T., (1991) The Social System, 2nd Ed. London Routledge.

Patton, M. Q., (1990). Qualitative evaluation and research methods (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Pearson, E., and Rao, N., (2006) Early Childhood Education Policy Reform in Hong Kong: Challenges in Effecting Change in Practices, Childhood Education, 82:6, 363-368, DOI: [10.1080/00094056.2006.10522863](https://doi.org/10.1080/00094056.2006.10522863).

Pearson, E., (2011) Avoiding recolonisation in early childhood: promoting local values as mediators in the spread of globalisation. Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 12(3), 212-23.

Pennycook, A., (2002) English Discourses of Colonialism. Routledge London.

Peterman, A., Bhatia, A., Guedes, A., (2020). Remote Data Collection on Violence against Women during COVID-19: A Conversation with Experts on Ethics, Measurement and Research Priorities (Part 1). Available from: [https://www.unicef-irc.org/article/1997-remote-data-collection-on-violence-against-women-during-covid-19-a-conversation-with.html, accessed 5 August 5 2020](https://www.unicef-irc.org/article/1997-remote-data-collection-on-violence-against-women-during-covid-19-a-conversation-with.html,%20accessed%205%20August%205%202020). accessed 13-2-23.

Phillipson, S., and Phillipson, S. N., (2007) Academic expectations, beliefs of ability, and involvement by parents as predictors of child achievement: A cross-cultural comparison Educational Psychology, 27 (3) (2007), pp. 329-348.

Plano Clark, V. L., and Ivankova, N. V., (2016). Mixed methods research: a guide to the field. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Plowright, D., (2011) Using Mixed Methods frameworks for an integrated methodology. London, Sage.

Polit D. F., and Beck C. T., (2014). Essentials of nursing research: Appraising evidence for nursing practice. Philadelphia, PA: Wolters Kluwer/Lippincott/Williams & Wilkins Health.

Pre-Primary Education Voucher scheme, Executive Summary, (online No Date) available from: [www.aud.gov.hk?pdf-e/60ch03sum.pdf. Accessed 14/8/2020](http://www.aud.gov.hk?pdf-e/60ch03sum.pdf.%20Accessed%2014/8/2020).

Pring, R., (2015) Philosophy of educational research, 3rd ed. London: Bloomsbury.

Pring, R., (2000) The ‘False Dualism’ of Educational Research. Journal of the Philosophy of Education. Vol. 34 No 2 pp 247-260.

Pilcher, M., 2022, Early Years Alliance-Why the DfE's proposed changes to the early learning goals are flawed available from: [Why the DfE's proposed changes to the early learning goals are flawed | early years alliance (eyalliance.org.uk)](https://www.eyalliance.org.uk/why-dfes-proposed-changes-early-learning-goals-are-flawed) accessed 3-10-22. Punch, K. (2014) Introduction to Social Research Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches 3rd Ed, London, Sage Publications.

Punch, K., and Oancea, A., (2014) 2nd Ed, Introduction to Research methods in Education. London, Sage Publications.

Quentin, A., (2021) Outlier exclusion procedures must be blind to the researchers Hypothesis. Journal of experimental psychology. DOI: 10.1037/xge0001069.

Rankin, L., (2000). Lessons Learned: Addressing Common Misconceptions About Inquiry in Inquiry: Thoughts, Views, and Strategies for the K–5 Classroom foundation volume 2 Division of Elementary, Secondary, and Informal Education National Science Foundation Arlington, VA.

Rao, N., and Chan, C. K. K., (2009). ‘Moving beyond Paradoxes: Understanding Chinese Learners and Their Teachers.’ In Revisiting the Chinese Learner: Changing Contexts, Changing Education, edited by C. K. K. Chan and N. Rao, 3–31. Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre/Springer Academic Publishers.

Rao, N., and Li, H., (2009). Quality matters: Early Childhood Education policy in Hong Kong. Early Child Development and Care, 179(3), 233–245.

Rao, N., Ng, S. S. N., and Pearson, E. C., (2009). ‘Preschool Pedagogy: A Fusion of Traditional Chinese Beliefs and Contemporary Notions of Appropriate Practice.’ In Revisiting the Chinese Learner: Changing Contexts, Changing Education, edited by Chan C. K. K., and Rao, N., 255–279. Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre/Springer Academic Publishers.

Ratzinger, J., (2021) Western Culture, today and tomorrow, Ignatius press, San Francisco.

Ren, L., and Edwards. C. P., (2017). ‘Chinese Parents’ Expectations and Child Preacademic Skills: The Indirect Role of Parenting and Social Competence.’ Early Education and Development 28 (8): 1052–1071. DOI: 10.1080/10409289.2017.1319784.

Report on the Review of the Kindergarten Education Scheme 2021, available from: <https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/tc/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/free-quality-kg-edu/review-report/Report-on-KG-review_E_clean.pdf> accessed 3-11-2023.

Rizvi, F., and Lingard. B., (2010). Globalizing Education Policy. Oxon, UK: Routledge. Schmidt, R. C. 1997. ‘Managing Delphi Surveys Using Nonparametric Statistical Techniques.’ Decision Sciences 28: 763–774.

Robson, C., (2011) Real World Research, United Kingdom, Wiley.

Roberts, R., (2010) Wellbeing from Birth, Sage, London.

Robert-Holmes, G., (2011) Doing your Early Years Research Project, a step-by-step guide, 2nd Ed. Sage, London.

Robert-Holmes, G., (2014) Doing your Early Years Research Project, a step-by-step guide, 3rd Ed. Sage, London.

Rogoff, B., (2003). The cultural nature of human development. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Roman, A. F., and Pinto, M.L.C., ‘Parental Values and Children’s Attitude Towards Reading.’ Procedia - Social and Behavioural Sciences, vol. 197, no. C, (2015), pp. 939–943., DOI: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.277.

Rosenwasser, D., and Stephen, J., (2019). Writing analytically, 6th ed, Wadsworth Cengae Learning, Boston.

Ryan, L., (2015). ‘Inside’ and ‘outside’ of what or where? Researching migration through multi-positionalities. Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 16(2), Art. 17, <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1502175>.

Ruel, E., Wagner lll, W.E., and Gillespie, B.J., (2016) The practice of Survey research, theory and applications London, Sage.

Ryan, L., and Golden, A., (2006) ‘‘Tick the Box Please’: A Reflexive Approach to Doing Quantitative Social Research’, Sociology, 40(6), pp. 1191–1200. DOI: 10.1177/0038038506072287.

Saracho, O.N., (2020) An integrated Play-based Curriculum for Young children. London, Routledge.

Savin-Baden, M., and Major, C., (2013) Qualitative Research, The essential guide to theory and practice. London, Routledge.

Salmons, J., (2014). (2nd Ed), Qualitative online interviews: strategies, design, and skills. Sage, London.

Salili, F., Chiu, C.Y., and Lai, S., 2001. ‘The influence of culture and context on students’ motivational orientation and performance.’ In Student motivation: The culture and context of learning, Edited by: Salili, F., Chiu, C.Y., and Hong, Y.Y., 221–247. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Schnackenberg, H. L., and Simard, D. A., (2019). Challenges and opportunities for women in higher education leadership. IGI Global, Hershey.

Schroeder, D., Singh, M., Herissone-Kelly, P., Chennells, R., Chatfield, K., (2019). Equitable Research Partnerships: A Global Code of Conduct to Counter Ethics Dumping. Germany: Springer International Publishing.

Schwartz, S. H. A., (2006). theory of cultural value orientations: Explication and applications. Comp. Soc. 5, 137–182. DOI: 10.1163/156913306778667357

Schwartz, S. H. A., (1999) A theory of Cultural Values and some implications for work. Applied Psychology: an international review, 1999, 48 (1), 23–47.

Schweinhart, L., J., Montie, Z., Xiang, W. S., Barnett, C. R., Belfield, and Nores. M., (2005). Lifetime Effects: The High Scope Perry Preschool Study through Age 40 (Monographs of the High Scope Educational Research Foundation, 14). Ypsilanti, MI: High Scope Press.

Sewell, W., (2008) The concept of Culture. London, Routledge.

Shaw, K. E., (1978). Understanding the curriculum: The approach through case studies. Journal of Curriculum Studies, 10(1), 1-17.

Shea, M., Yang, L. H., and Leong, F. T.L., (2010) ‘Loss, Psychosis, and Chronic Suicidality in a Korean American Immigrant Man: Integration of Cultural Formulation Model and Multicultural Case Conceptualization’, Asian American Journal of Psychology 1(3): 212-223.

Shengtao Wu, M., (2019) Costs and benefits of cultural value mismatch in the globalising era: A commentary on the special issue ‘cross‐cultural value mismatch: A by‐product of migration and population diversity around the world’ (IJP, December, 2018) International journal of Psychology available from: [https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/DOI/full/10.1002/ijop.12628](https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/doi/full/10.1002/ijop.12628) accessed 25-11-2019.

Shek, T.L., and Sun, R. C.F., (no date) Parenting in Hong Kong: traditional Chinese cultural roots and contemporary phenomena available from: [Parenting in Hong Kong : traditional Chinese cultural roots and contemporary phenomena — Poly U Scholars Hub](https://research.polyu.edu.hk/en/publications/parenting-in-hong-kong-traditional-chinese-cultural-roots-and-con#:~:text=These%20include%20focus%20on%20family%20harmony%2C%20well-defined%20parental,boys%20and%20girls%2C%20and%20emphasis%20on%20filial%20piety.), accessed 7-9-2024

Shuey, E., and Kankaras, M., (2018) The power and promise of early learning OECD Education Working Paper No. 186 Directorate for Education and skills unclassified. Available from: http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=EDU/WKP%20%282018%2922anddocLanguage=En accessed 11-3-2019.

Sikder, S., and Fleer, M., (2015). ‘Small Science’: infants and toddlers experiencing science in everyday family life. Research in Science Education, 45(3), 445–464. [https://DOI.org/10.1007/s11165-014-9431-0](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11165-014-9431-0).

Sikes, P., and Potts, A., (2008) Researching education from the inside: investigations from within. Oxford, Routledge.

Simply Psychology, (2005). Bronfenbrenner bio-ecological system graph online available from <https://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=https://www.simplypsychology.org/wp-content/uploads/Bronfenbrenner-Ecological-Systems.jpg&tbnid=h1fJexY2BppfgM&vet=1&imgrefurl=https://www.simplypsychology.org/bronfenbrenner.html&docid=GAtBMRscIqlhjM&w=633&h=642&source=sh/x/im/m1/1> accessed 11-3-2022.

Singer, D.G., Golinkoff, R., Hirsh-Pasek, K., (Eds.), (2006) Play = learning: How play motivates and enhances children’s cognitive and social-emotional growth, New York, NY.

Siraj-Blatchford, I., Sylva, K., Muttock, S., Gilden, R,. and Bell, D., (2002) Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years, University of Oxford, Department for Education and Skills.

Smythe, W. E., and Murray, M.J., (2005) ‘Owning the story: ethical considerations in narrative research’ in Sheehy, K., Nind, M., Rix, J., and Simmons, K., (2005) Ethics and research in inclusive education: values into practice. Oxon: Routledge Falmer.

South China Post, Ng Kang-Chung (2016), Education, ‘From Kindergarten age, Hong Kong’s children are tutored to be winners. Published 9-august-2016, available from: [https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/education-community/article/2001021/kindergarten-age-hong-kongs-children-are-tutored accessed 5-2-2019](https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/education-community/article/2001021/kindergarten-age-hong-kongs-children-are-tutored%20accessed%205-2-2019).

Spencer, L., Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Dillon, L., Quality in qualitative evaluation: a framework for assessing research evidence. National Centre for Social Research 2003 [https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/166\_policy\_hub\_a\_quality\_framework.pdf accessed 20-9-2023](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/166_policy_hub_a_quality_framework.pdf%C2%A0accessed%2020-9-2023).

Spradley, J., (no date) What is Culture, available from: <https://sphweb.bumc.bu.edu/otlt/mph-modules/PH/CulturalAwareness/CulturalAwareness2.html#:~:text=Culture%20can%20be%20defined%20as,%2C%20religion%2C%20rituals%2C%20art>. accessed 29-5-2024.

Stake, R. E., (1995) The art of case study research. London, Sage.

Steuerle, C. E., (2000). ‘Common Issues for Voucher Programs.’ In Vouchers and the Provision of Public Services, edited by Steuerle, C.E., Ooms, V. D., Peterson, G., and Reishauer, R.D., 3–39. Washington, DC: Brookings Institute Press.

Stern, P.C., Kalof, L, Dietz, T., and Guagnano, G.A., Values beliefs and environmental action: attitude formation towards emergent attitude objects. applied social Psychology. 1995;25(18):1611-1636.

Streiner, D., and Norman G., Generalizability. In: Health Measurement Scales: A Practical Guide to their Development and Use, 2nd edn. New York: Oxford University Press; 1995: 128–43.

Sue, V. M., and Ritter, L. A., (2016). Conducting online surveys. Los Angeles, Sage.

Sun, Q., (2008) Confucian educational philosophy and its implication for lifelong learning and lifelong education. International Journal of Lifelong Education, 27(5), 559-78.

Sung, B.L., (1985) Bicultural conflicts in Chinese Immigrant children. Journal of comparative Family Studies, 16, 255-269.

Sussman, N. M., (2011). Return migration and identity: a global phenomenon, a Hong Kong case. Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press.

Tamis-Le Monda, C. S., and McFadden, K. E., (2010). The United States of America. In M.H. Bornstein (Ed.), Handbook of cultural developmental science (pp. 2299–2322). New York, NY: Psychology Press.

Tamis-Le Monda C. S., Way, N., Hughes D., Yoshikawa, H., Kalman, R. K., Niwa, E. Y., (2008). Parents' goals for children: The dynamic coexistence of individualism and collectivism in cultures and individuals. Social Development, 17, 183-209.

Taylor, G. W., and Ussher, J. M., (2001). Making sense of Sand M: A discourse analytic account. Sexualities, 4(3), 293-314.

The Law of the People’s Republic of China onSafeguarding National Security in theHong Kong Special Administrative Regio (NSL) (2020) available from[In full: Official English translation of the Hong Kong national security law - Hong Kong Free Press HKFP (hongkongfp.com)](https://hongkongfp.com/2020/07/01/in-full-english-translation-of-the-hong-kong-national-security-law/) accessed 5-4-23.

Thomas, G., (2013). How to do your research project. (Second Edition), Sage, London.

Thorne, S., (2000). Data analysis in qualitative research. Evidence Based Nursing, 3, 68–70. DOI: 10.1136/ebn.3.3.68.

Thornton, L., and Brunton, P., (2015) Understanding the Reggio Approach 3rd Ed, Routledge, London.

Trauth, E.M., (Ed.) (2001 b) The choice of qualitative research methods in IS. In Qualitative Research in IS: Issues and Trends. Idea Group, Hershey, PA.

Trodd. L., (2016) The Early Years Handbook for Students and Practitioners. Routledge, Oxon.

Tse, M., (2020), article in the South China morning post: What do Hong Kong’s preschool kids know about interviews? Available from: [https://www.scmp.com/comment/letters/article/2149730/what-do-hong-kongs-preschool-kids-know-about-interviews accessed 29-5-2023](https://www.scmp.com/comment/letters/article/2149730/what-do-hong-kongs-preschool-kids-know-about-interviews%20accessed%2029-5-2023).

Tu, W., and Du, W., (1996) Confucian Traditions in East Asian Modernity. Harvard University press, London.

Tudge, J., Hayes, S., Doucet, F., Odero, D., Kulakova, N., Tammeveski, P., Meltsas, M., and Soeun, L., (2000). Parents' participation in cultural practices with their preschoolers. Psicologia : Teoria e Pesquisa, 16(1), 1-10. [https://dx.DOI.org/10.1590/S0102-37722000000100002](https://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0102-37722000000100002).

Tung, R., (2014) ‘Research on Asia: promise and perils’, Journal of Asia Business Studies, Vol. 8 Issue: 3, pp. 189-192, [https://DOI.org/10.1108/JABS-03-2014-0025](https://doi.org/10.1108/JABS-03-2014-0025).

Tung Chee, H., (2018) ‘[Beijing won’t appoint winner of chief executive race if it finds candidate ‘unacceptable’, elder statesman Tung Chee warns](https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/2072986/beijing-wont-appoint-unacceptable-candidate-even-if-they-win)‘ in South China Morning Post 20 Jul, 2018.

Tveit, A., D., (2009) A parental voice: parents as equal and dependent – rhetoric about parents, teachers, and their conversations, Educational Review, 61:3, 289-300, DOI: 10.1080/00131910903045930.

UNESCO, (2014) Roadmap for implementing the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural organisation.

[UNESCO, (1996) Delors report, Learning : The Treasure Within, available from:1996](https://www.racismnoway.com.au/about-racism/understanding/index-references.html#unesco96)<https://unescocat.org/en/2018/10/10/learning-the-treasure-within-1996/> accessed 17/7/2020.

United Nations, (2015). ‘Education – United Nations Sustainable Development.’ available from https://www.un. Org/sustainable development/education/ accessed 15-8-2020.

Van Deur. P., and Murray-Harvey R., (2005). The inquiry nature of primary schools and students’ self-directed learning knowledge International Education Journal, ERC2004 Special Issue, 2005, 5(5), 166-177.

Valado, T., and Amster, R., (2012). Professional lives, personal struggles: Ethics and advocacy in research on homelessness. Lanham, MD, Lexington Books.

Vélez-Agosto N.M., Soto-Crespo J.G., Vizcarrondo-Oppenheimer M., Vega-Molina S., García Coll C., (2017) Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological Theory Revision: Moving Culture from the Macro into the Micro. Perspectives on Psychological Science. 2017;12(5):900-910. DOI: [10.1177/1745691617704397](https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691617704397).

Veeck, A., L., Flurry, and Jiang, N., (2003). ‘Equal Dreams: The One Child Policy and the Consumption of Education in Urban China.’ Consumption, Markets and Culture 6 (1): 81– 94. DOI: 10.1080/10253860302697.

Vilkka, L., (1997). The intrinsic value of nature. Amsterdam, Rodopi.

Vivian, L., Ford, M., Breiner, H. (Eds) Parenting matters: Supporting Parents of Children Ages 0-8 available from [Parenting Matters - Google Books](https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Parenting_Matters/xrmhDQAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=children+observing+parents,+to+gain+skills&printsec=frontcover) accessed 12-11-2023.

Voicu, B., Voicu, M., (coord.) (2007). Valori ale românilor 1993 – 2006 (Values of Romanians 1993-2006), (pp. 206, 207). Iasi, Institute European.

Vygotsky, L. S., (1978). Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. (Original manuscripts [ca. 1930–1934].

Walker-Barnes, C. J., and Mason, C. A., (2004). Delinquency and substance use among gang-involved youth: The moderating role of parenting practices. American Journal of Community Psychology, 34, 235-250.

Walker, S., Brownlee, J., Whiteford, C., Cobb-Moore, C., Johansson, E., (2012). Early years teachers’ epistemic beliefs and beliefs about children moral learning. Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 18(2), 263–275. [https://DOI-org.hull.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/13540602.2012.632267](https://doi-org.hull.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/13540602.2012.632267).

Wang, S., And Tamis-Lamonda, C. S., (2003) Do childrearing values in Taiwan and the United States reflect cultural values of collectivism and individualism. Journal of Cross-cultural Psychology, 34(6),629-642.

Wang, Q., and Chang, L., (2010). Parenting and child socialization in contemporary China. In Bond, M. H., (Ed.), The Oxford handbook of Chinese psychology. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Ward, Z.B., (2021) On value laden science, Studies in history and Philosophy of science Part A, Elsevier Volume 85 Pages 54-62.

Wati, S., (2018) What is a teacher, available from: <https://repository.uir.ac.id/427/2/bab2.pdf> accessed on 29-5-2024.

Watkins, D., and Biggs, J., (1992). The Chinese Learner: Cultural, psychological, and contextual influences. Hong Kong: The University of Hong Kong, Comparative Education Centre.

Watkins, D. A., and Biggs, J. B., (2001). ‘The paradox of the Chinese learner and beyond.’ In Teaching the Chinese learner: Psychological and pedagogical perspective, Edited by: Watkins, D. A., and Biggs, J. B., 1–23. Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre, The University of Hong Kong, and Australian Council for Educational Research.

Watkins, D. A., (2009). ‘Motivation and Competition in Hong Kong Secondary Schools: The Students’ Perspective.’ In Revisiting the Chinese Learner: Changing Contexts, Changing Education, edited by Chan, C. K. K., and Rao, N., 71–88. Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre/Springer Academic Publishers.

Weisner, T. S., (2009). Culture, development, and diversity: Expectable pluralism and expectable conflict. Ethos, 37,181–196.

Wells, K., (2011) Narrative Enquiry. Oxford: University press.

Wellington, J., Bathmaker, A., Hunt, C., McCulloch, G., and Sikes, P., (2005) Succeeding with your doctorate. London: Sage.

Wellington, J., (2015) Educational research: contemporary issues and practical approaches. 2nd edition. London, Bloomsbury.

Wertsch, J. V., (2009). Voices of the Mind Sociocultural Approach to Mediated Action. Michigan, Cambridge Harvard University press.

Willig, C., (2013). Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology. Maidenhead, McGraw-Hill Education.

Wilson, J., (2010) Essentials of Business Research: A Guide to Doing Your Research Project. London, SAGE Publications.

Wong, D. F. K., Zhuang, X.U., and Ng, T.K., (2019) Is parental control beneficial or harmful to the development of young children in Hong Kong? Journal of child and family studies 28, 831-838 (2019) available from: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10826-018-1301-3> accessed 12-11-2022.

Wong, J., and Rao, N., (2015). The evolution of Early Childhood Education policy in Hong Kong. International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy. 9. 10.1007/s40723-015-0006-y.

Wong, P. Y. H., (2019). Teaching beliefs on developmentally appropriate practice among Chinese preschool teachers: The role of personality. Frontiers in Psychology. [https://DOI-org.hull.idm.oclc.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02822](https://doi-org.hull.idm.oclc.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02822).

Wong Tsui-Kai., (2020) Ethnic minority students in Hong Kong suffer at school and work due to prejudice, language. published 23-June 2020, available from [Ethnic minority students in Hong Kong suffer at school and work due to prejudice, language - YP | South China Morning Post (scmp.com)](https://www.scmp.com/yp/discover/news/hong-kong/article/3090283/ethnic-minority-students-hong-kong-suffer-school-and) accessed 11-7-2023.

Wong, J., and Rao, N., (2022) Pursuing quality in Early Childhood Education with a government-regulated voucher: views of parents and service providers in Hong Kong, Journal of Education Policy, 37:1, 39-68, DOI: 10.1080/02680939.2020.1764628.

Wu, S. C., (2014) Practical and conceptual aspects of children’s play in Hong Kong and German kindergartens. Early Years, 34(1), 49-66.

Xinhua, (2017) ‘Hong Kong and the motherland -- reunited forever, thriving together’. Article by Xinhua, 1/7/2017 available from: China Daily newspaper [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2017-07/01/content\_29956939.htm accessed 26/6/2019](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2017-07/01/content_29956939.htm%20accessed%2026/6/2019).

Yang, Y., and Elisseeff, D., (1986). China, treasures, and splendours: Palais de la civilisation, Montreal, May 18-October 19, 1986.

Yang, W., and Li, H., (2018 b) Cultural ideology matters in early childhood curriculum innovations: a comparative case study of Chinese kindergartens between Hong Kong and Shenzhen. Journal of Curriculum Studies, 50(4), 560-85.

Yang, W., and Li, H., (2019) Early Childhood Curriculum in Chinese Societies: Policies, Practices, and Prospects. Routledge, London. DOI:[10.4324/9781351027267](http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781351027267).

Youniss, J., (1994). Rearing children for society. In W. Damon (Series Ed.) and J. Smetana (Vol. Ed.), New directions for child development, Vol. 66. Beliefs about parenting: Origins and developmental implications (pp. 37-50). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Yin, R. K., (2011) Qualitative Research from start to finish. London, the Guildford press.

Yin, R. K., (2014) Case study research: design and methods. 5th edition. London, Sage.

Yu, T., (2021, July 14), ‘Hong Kong Exodus gathers pace as thousands vote with their feet’, available from: Washington post article [Hong Kong people leave for Britain in the thousands after national security law - The Washington Post](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/07/14/hong-kong-exodus-britain-emigration/) accessed 20-8-2021.

Yuen, G. W. K., (2005). ‘Education Reform Policy and Early Childhood Teacher Education in Hong Kong before and after the Transfer of Sovereignty to China in 1997.’ EdD diss., Columbia University.

Yuen, G., and S. J., Grieshaber. (2009). ‘Parents’ Choice of Early Childhood Education Services in Hong Kong: A Pilot Study about Vouchers.’ Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood 10: 263–279. DOI: 10.2304/ ciec. 2009.10.3.263.

Zheng Wan, T., (2016) online article ‘winning from the starting line’, available from: [www.hkiaps.cuhk.edu.hk](http://www.hkiaps.cuhk.edu.hk), accessed 10-11-2023.

Zhou, Q., Eisenberg, N., Wang, Y., and Reiser, M., (2004). Chinese children’s effortful control and dispositional anger/frustration: Relations to parenting styles and children’s social functioning. Developmental Psychology, 40, 352–366.

# Appendices

**Appendix 1: Ethical Application and Ethical Approval letter.**

A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generated

A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generated

A screenshot of a document

Description automatically generated

A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generated

A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generated



**Appendix 2a: Information sheet for parents.**

*Parental values and the impact on choices for Early Childhood Education*

*You are being invited to participate in a research project called Parental values for Early Childhood settings. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being undertaken and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Feel free to ask if there is anything that you do not understand, or if you would like more information. Thank you for taking the time to read this Participant Information Sheet.*

**Parent Participant Information Sheet**

**What is the project’s purpose?**

Parental values and the impact on choices for Early Childhood Education is a research project that seeks to gain understanding of values of parents which impact on motivational aspects which parents have for their children and influence the values have on choices of kindergarten.

This study is aiming to help me as a researcher to gain wider understanding of what has led you to choose the early years setting (nursery, playgroup, kindergarten) your child is attending. As part of my study, I would like to be able to gain some understanding of your values as a parent and your reasons for choosing a particular kindergarten.

I am undertaking this study in Hong Kong to enable me to gain wider understanding of parental values and how these values impact on choices parents make for their children in regards Early Childhood Education in Hong Kong.

The research will run for 2 years, beginning in January 2020, and ending in October 2021.

**Why have I been chosen?**

I want to invite parents/carers to participate in a short interview. I have chosen you for this as you have a child in the correct age category (for attending Early Years education) and your contribution will give me some very current information regarding choices and values you hold as a parent.

**Do I have to take part?**

No, it is up to you to decide whether you take part or not. Your participation in Parental values and the impact on choices for Early Childhood Education is entirely voluntary.

You will be asked to sign a form to say that you are happy to participate in Parental values and the impact on choices for Early Childhood Education. However, you can still change your mind and stop participating (also known as ‘withdrawing’). You can with withdraw at any time and you do not even have to give a reason.

**What will happen to me if I become a participant?**

I want to ensure that my research is as flexible as possible; participation can be shaped and adapted to fit around the needs and desires of you and your family. For example, you might want to participate in an interview during a particular time of the day or week. The Interview will be conducted using either Zoom or Google hangout and will be recorded. This recording will only be seen by the researcher and will not be shared with anyone else so is completely confidential. The interview will only be used for this specific research project and will be destroyed after completion of the project.

**What do I have to do?**

You would participate by taking part in a semi-structured interview. This interview will be undertaken via an online social media site such as Zoom or google hangout, the interview itself will be audio-recorded and might take up to 20 to 30 minutes to complete.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

We don’t foresee any serious disadvantages or risks in participating in Parental values and the impact on choices for Early Childhood Education. However, sometimes reflecting on our lives can be upsetting or distressing, particularly when we are speaking about the lives and futures of our children. I (the researcher) have worked with families and children for the past 25 years and have undertaken the delivery of pastoral care in a range of settings. I am a Program Director and lecturer in Early Childhood Studies at a University in England.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

While we can’t foresee any major *individual* benefits to taking part, you might find participating in a research project interesting and informative. You might also find it important and/or helpful to have the opportunity to contribute your story to a research project that aims to gain wider understanding of parental choices, and the impact personal values and cultural aspects may have on these choices.

**What happens if the research project stops earlier than expected?**

This is unlikely as this research project is a project which is aiming to gain wider understanding of parental values and choices for children and is undertaken as a self-funded study with the aim to enable the researcher to gain their Doctorate in Early Childhood Studies. If for any reason the research project stops earlier than expected, you will be offered a full and clear explanation as to why.

**What if something goes wrong?**

If you feel something has gone wrong, you are advised to contact the Principal Investigator (PI) of Parental values and the impact on choices for Early Childhood Education, Thamara Bulmer. You can find her contact details at the end of this document.

If you feel that your complaint has not been dealt with appropriately, you can contact the Thamara’s Supervisor at the School of Education at the University of Sheffield, Dr Emma Pearson, who will escalate the complaint through the appropriate channels:

Dr Emma Pearson

School of Education

Edgar Allen House

University of Sheffield

241 Glossop Road

Sheffield, S10 2GW

Email: Emma.pearson@sheffield.ac.uk

**Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?**

As a participant of the research, your participation in the project will be kept strictly confidential. You can also choose not to be identified in any reports or publications when I write up the findings of the research. I will make every attempt to anonymise research write-ups; for example, I will replace your name with a pseudonym and take out any obviously identifiable features of you and your story. However, although unlikely, we cannot guarantee that someone who knows you or your life very well won’t be able to identify you.

**What will happen to the results of the research project?**

This research is aiming to give the researcher some background information regarding parental values when choosing an early years setting for their children. The information will then be used to inform a thesis project which will hopefully lead to the researcher gaining the qualification of Dr in Early Childhood Studies. The material gathered could be used for presentation purposes and for reports or journal paper writing.

Future research: Data collected will be used to inform a thesis study and could be used to write reports, journals and/or chapters in a book.

Due to the nature of this research, it is possible that other researchers may find the data collected to be useful in answering future research questions. I will ask for your explicit consent for your data to be shared in this way and if you agree, I will ensure that the data collected about you is untraceable back to you before allowing others to use it. If you have any questions about this, don’t hesitate to ask.

**15. Who is organising and funding the research?**

The research is self-funded and organised by Thamara Bulmer

**Who has ethically reviewed the project?**

This project has been ethically approved via Sheffield University and the School of Education’s Ethics review procedure. The University’s Research Ethics Committee monitors the application and delivery of the University’s Ethics Review Procedure across the University.

**17. Contact for further information**

If you have any questions about the study, please contact either:

Thamara Bulmer

Program Director and Lecturer in Early Childhood Studies

Email: TMBBulmer1@sheffield.ac.uk

You will be given a copy of this information sheet and a signed consent form to keep.

**Thank you for taking the time to read about the Parental values and the impact on choices for Early Childhood Education.**

***~ Thamara Bulmer, MEd, BEd, FHEA, Cert Ed ~***

**Appendix 2b: Information sheet for Teachers.**

*You are being invited to participate in a research project called Parental values and the impact on choices for Early Childhood Education. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Feel free to ask if there is anything that you do not understand, or if you would like more information. Thank you for taking the time to read this Participant Information Sheet.*

**Teacher Participant Information Sheet**

**What is the project’s purpose?**

Parental values and the impact on choices for Early Childhood Education is a research project that seeks to gain understanding of values of parent’s which impact on motivational aspects which parents have for their children and influence the values have on choices of kindergarten. It further seeks understanding of wider educational values and how these are included within the kindergarten.

This study is aiming to help me as a researcher to gain wider understanding of what has led parents to choose the early years setting (nursery, playgroup, kindergarten) their child is attending. As part of my study, I would like to be able to gain some understanding of parental end educational values.

I am undertaking this study in Hong Kong to enable me to gain wider understanding of parental and educational values and how these values impact on choices parents make for their children in regards Early Childhood Education in Hong Kong.

The research will run for 2 years, beginning in January 2019, and ending in October 2020.

**Why have I been chosen?**

I want to invite teachers to participate in the completion of a short questionnaire and if you agree also in a short interview. I have chosen you for this as you work with children in the correct age category (for attending Early Years education) and your contribution will give me some very current information regarding choices and values you hold as a teacher.

**Do I have to take part?**

No, it is up to you to decide whether you take part or not. Your participation in Parental values and the impact on choices for Early Childhood Education is entirely voluntary.

You will be asked to sign a form to say that you are happy to participate in Parental values and the impact on choices for Early Childhood Education. However, you can still change your mind and stop participating (also known as ‘withdrawing’). You can with withdraw at any time and you do not even have to give a reason.

*Parental values and the impact on choices for Early Childhood Education*

**What will happen to me if I become a participant?**

In Parental values and the impact on choices for Early Childhood Education, I want to ensure that my research is as flexible as possible; participation can be shaped and adapted to fit around the needs and desires of you and your family. For example, you might want to participate in an interview over Skype, the phone, or via other online means such as WhatsApp or Messenger.

I am looking to invite parents/carers and teachers to take part in the questionnaire and 5 parents/carers as well as 5 teachers to participate in an interview with myself, Thamara Bulmer, the researcher on the project. I believe that your input is vital to my research.

**What do I have to do?**

You would participate by completing a short questionnaire which would take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. Another way of participating would be to take part in a semi-structured interview. This interview can be undertaken face to face or via Skype or telephone, the interview itself will be audio-recorded and might take up to 15 to 30 minutes to complete.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

We don’t foresee any serious disadvantages or risks in participating in Parental values and the impact on choices for Early Childhood Education. However, sometimes reflecting on our lives can be upsetting or distressing, particularly when we are speaking about the lives and futures of children. Thamara has worked in education and with families and children for the past 25 years and has undertaken the delivery of pastoral care in a range of settings. Thamara is a lecturer at a University in England.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

While we can’t foresee any major *individual* benefits to taking part, you might find participating in a research project interesting and informative. You might also find it important and/or helpful to have the opportunity to contribute your story to a research project that aims to gain wider understanding of parental choices, and the impact personal values and cultural aspects may have on these choices.

**What happens if the research project stops earlier than expected?**

This is unlikely as this research project is a project which is aiming to gain wider understanding of parental values and choices for children and is undertaken as a self-funded study with the aim to enable to researcher to gain their Doctorate in Early Childhood Studies. If for any reason the research project stops earlier than expected, you will be offered a full and clear explanation as to why.

**What if something goes wrong?**

If you feel something has gone wrong, you are advised to contact the Principal Investigator (PI) of Parental values and the impact on choices for Early Childhood Education, Thamara Bulmer. You can find her contact details at the end of this document.

If you feel that your complaint has not been dealt with appropriately, you can contact the Thamara’s Supervisor at the School of Education at the University of Sheffield, Dr Emma Pearson, who will escalate the complaint through the appropriate channels:

Dr Emma Pearson

School of Education

Edgar Allen House

University of Sheffield

241 Glossop Road

Sheffield, S10 2GW

Email: Emma.pearson@sheffield.ac.uk

**Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?**

As a participant of the research, your participation in the project will be kept strictly confidential. You can also choose not to be identified in any reports or publications when I write up the findings of the research. I will make every attempt to anonymise research write-ups; for example, I will replace your name with a pseudonym and take out any obviously identifiable features of you and your story. However, although unlikely, we cannot guarantee that someone who knows you or your life very well won’t be able to identify you.

**What will happen to the results of the research project?**

This research is aiming to give the researcher some background information regarding parental values when choosing an early years setting for their children. The information will then be used to inform a thesis project which will hopefully lead to the researcher gaining the qualification of Dr in Early Childhood Studies. The material gathered could be used for presentation purposes and for reports or journal paper writing.

Future research: Data collected will be used to inform a thesis study and could be used to write reports, journals and/or chapters in a book.

Due to the nature of this research, it is possible that other researchers may find the data collected to be useful in answering future research questions. I will ask for your explicit consent for your data to be shared in this way and if you agree, I will ensure that the data collected about you is untraceable back to you before allowing others to use it. If you have any questions about this, don’t hesitate to ask.

**15. Who is organising and funding the research?**

The research is self-funded and organised by Thamara Bulmer

**Who has ethically reviewed the project?**

This project has been ethically approved via Sheffield University and the School of Education’s Ethics review procedure. The University’s Research Ethics Committee monitors the application and delivery of the University’s Ethics Review Procedure across the University.

**17. Contact for further information**

If you have any questions about the study, please contact:

Thamara Bulmer

Program Director and Lecturer in Early Childhood Studies

Email: **TMBBulmer1@sheffield.ac.uk**

Tel: +447545867992

You will be given a copy of this information sheet and a signed consent form to keep.

**Thank you for taking the time to read about the Parental values and the impact on choices for Early Childhood Education research.**

***~ Thamara Bulmer, MEd, BEd, FHEA, Cert Ed ~***

**Appendix 3: Consent sheet Parents Questionnaire.**

**Parental Values for Early Childhood settings Consent Form**

**This form is for Parent Research Participants: Questionnaire**

|  |
| --- |
| **Title of Research Project:** Parental Values  **Name of Researcher:** Thamara Bulmer  **Parent Participant: ………………………………………….. Please initial box**   1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet explaining   the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions  about the project.   1. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. I can email   Principle Investigator (PI) Thamara Bulmer [TMBBulmer1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:TMBBulmer1@sheffield.ac.uk) if I wish to discuss withdrawal or have any questions pertaining to withdrawal.   1. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission for members of the Research Management Team to have   access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be  linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable  in the report or reports that result from the research.  4. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research and publications, if necessary.   1. I agree to take part in the above research project.   \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Name of Participant Date Signature  (*Or legal representative*)    Lead Researcher Date Signature  Thamara Bulmer September 2020 A close up of a paper  Description automatically generated  Copies:  *Once all parties have signed this form the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/pre-written script/information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project’s main record (e.g. a site file), which must be kept in a secure location.* |

**Appendix 4: Consent sheet Teachers Questionnaire.**

**Parental Values for Early Childhood settings Consent Form**

**This form is for Teacher Research Participants: Questionnaire**

|  |
| --- |
| **Title of Research Project:** Parental Values  **Name of Researcher:** Thamara Bulmer  **Teacher Participant: ………………………………………….. Please initial box**   1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet explaining   the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions  about the project.   1. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. I can email   Principle Investigator (PI) Thamara Bulmer [TMBBulmer1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:TMBBulmer1@sheffield.ac.uk) if I wish to discuss withdrawal or have any questions pertaining to withdrawal.   1. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission for members of the Research Management Team to have   access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be  linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable  in the report or reports that result from the research.  4. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research and publications, if necessary.   1. I agree to take part in the above research project.   \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Name of Participant Date Signature  (*Or legal representative*)  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Lead Researcher Date Signature  Copies:  *Once all parties have signed this form the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/pre-written script/information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project’s main record (e.g. a site file), which must be kept in a secure location.* |
|  |

**Appendix 5: Parent Interview consent form:**

**Parental Values for Early Childhood settings Consent Form**

**This form is for Parent Research Participants: Interviews**

|  |
| --- |
| **Title of Research Project:** Parental Values  **Name of Researcher:** Thamara Bulmer  **Parent Participant: ………………………………………….. Please initial box**   1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet explaining   the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions.  about the project.   1. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. I can email   Principle Investigator (PI) Thamara Bulmer [TMBBulmer1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:TMBBulmer1@sheffield.ac.uk) if I wish to discuss withdrawal or have any questions pertaining to withdrawal.   1. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission for members of the Research Management Team to have   access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be  linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable  in the report or reports that result from the research.  4. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research and publications, if necessary.   1. I agree to take part in the above research project.   \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Name of Participant Date Signature  (*Or legal representative*)    Lead Researcher Date Signature  Thamara Bulmer September 2020 A close up of a paper  Description automatically generated  Copies:  *Once all parties have signed this form the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/pre-written script/information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project’s main record (e.g. a site file), which must be kept in a secure location.* |

**Appendix 6: Script with interview questions.**

Interview Questions for parents.

1. How old is your child?
2. Does your child attend a kindergarten/early years setting?
3. How did you choose the kindergarten your child attends? (Did you visit several kindergartens? Or what was it specifically that attracted you to the one you choose)
4. Did your child have to take part in an assessment? And if so, what did they have to do to be assessed?
5. What values do you want the kindergarten to teach your child?
6. Which values are important to you, and do you feel these are linked to maintaining your cultural values? please explain as much as you can.
7. Are academic achievement aspects important to you? Can you explain your answer please?
8. Which Academic aspects do you want your child to gain?
9. Do you feel there is a competitiveness in academic standards and maybe an impact on job prospects for the future of your child?
10. How far do you travel to the kindergarten? Do you pay privately, or do you make use of the voucher scheme of the government?
11. What impact do you think choosing the right kindergarten for your child will have on their future regarding learning new skills, values, academic achievement?
12. Is there anything else you want to add which you feel is important for me to understand as a reason for you choosing a kindergarten for your child?

**Appendix 7: Teacher questionnaire questions.**

1. As a teacher which values do you think your kindergarten or school should teach the children (write as many as you can think of).
2. Are these Confucian values?
3. Are these western Values, (please highlight which ones).
4. Do you think they are a combination of both those values?
5. What values do you think Parents want you to teach to their children?
6. Do you think parent choose a particular kindergarten based on the values taught there? Why do you think they may do this?

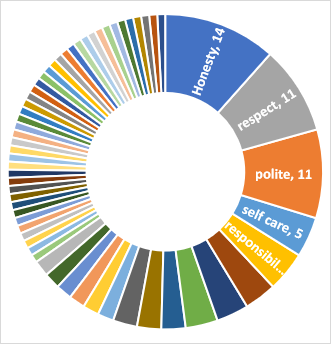
**Appendix 7.1 Figure 1a question 1 results**

A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generated

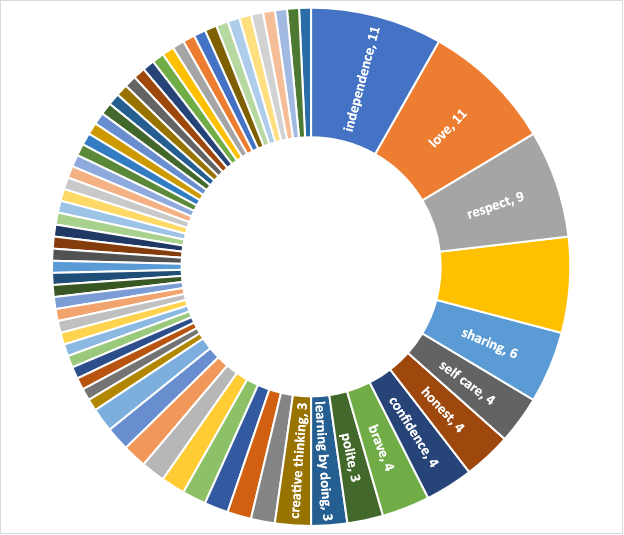
**Figure 7.1b Top ten most mentioned results**

**Appendix 7.2 a, Which values do you deem Confucian values?**



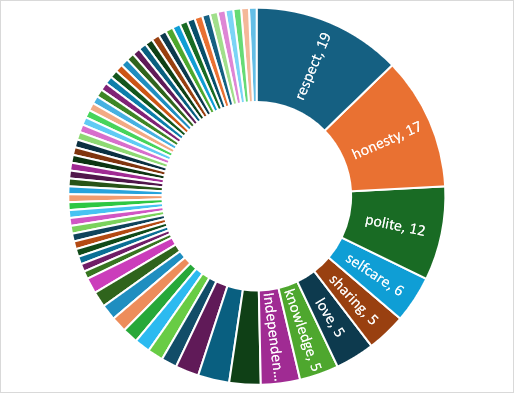
**Appendix 7.2 b Top ten answers**

**Appendix 7.3 a Which values do you deem to be western values.**



**Appendix 7.3 b top ten answers**

**Appendix 7.4 a What values do you think parents want you to teach their children**.



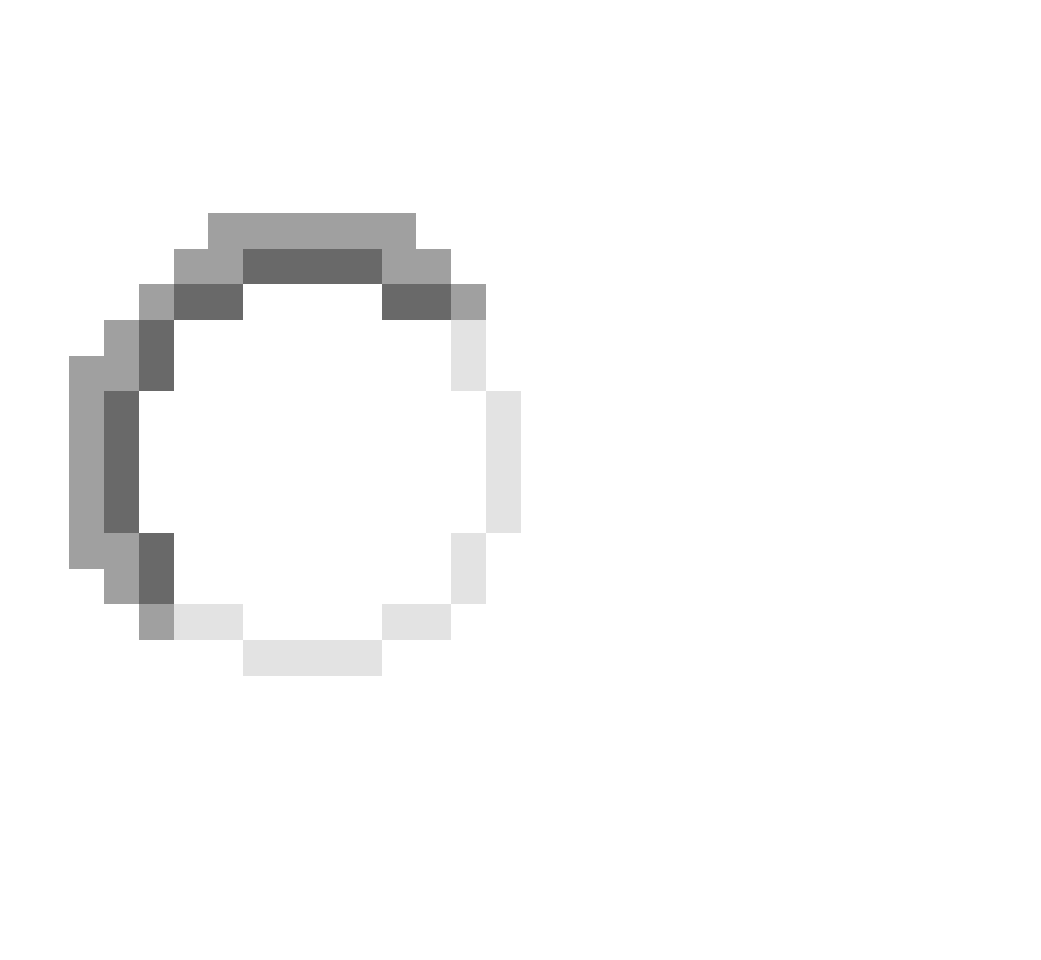
**Appendix 7.4 b Top ten answers.**

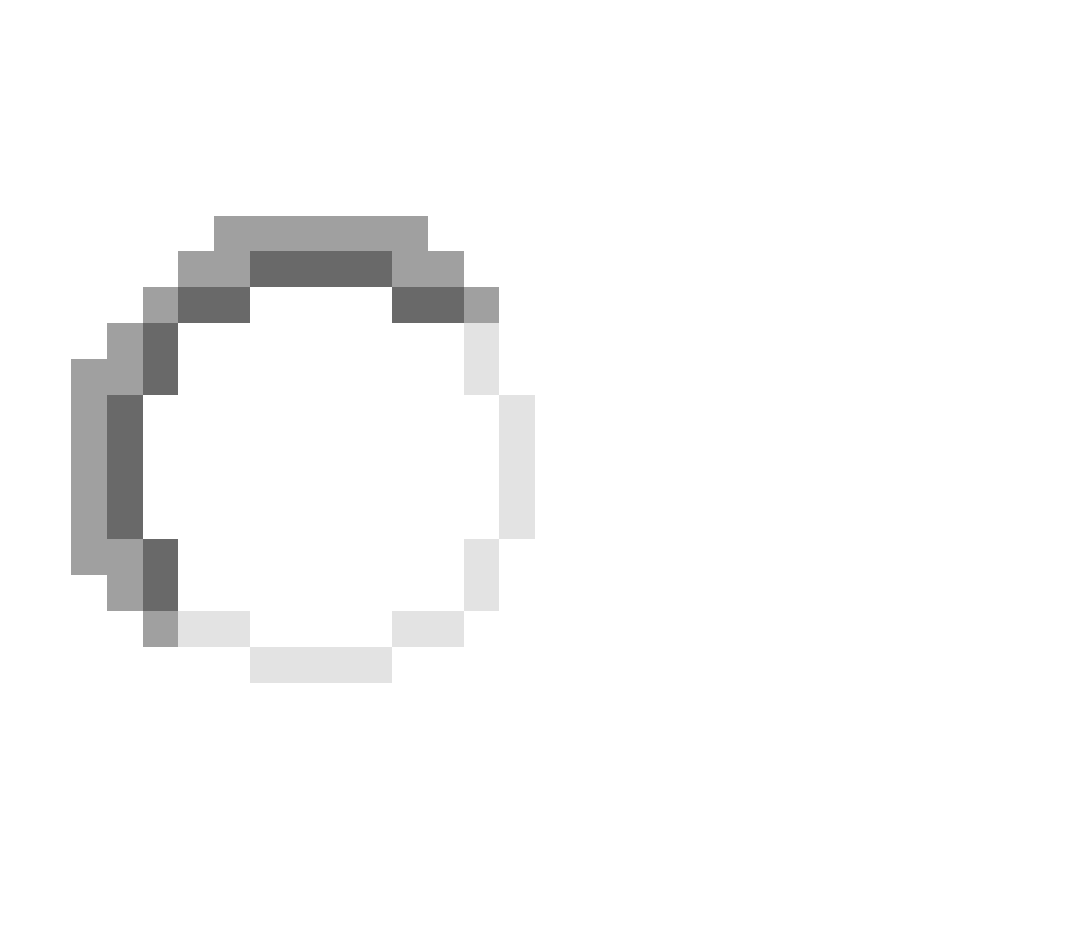
Appendix 7.4 c Overall findings of question 6.

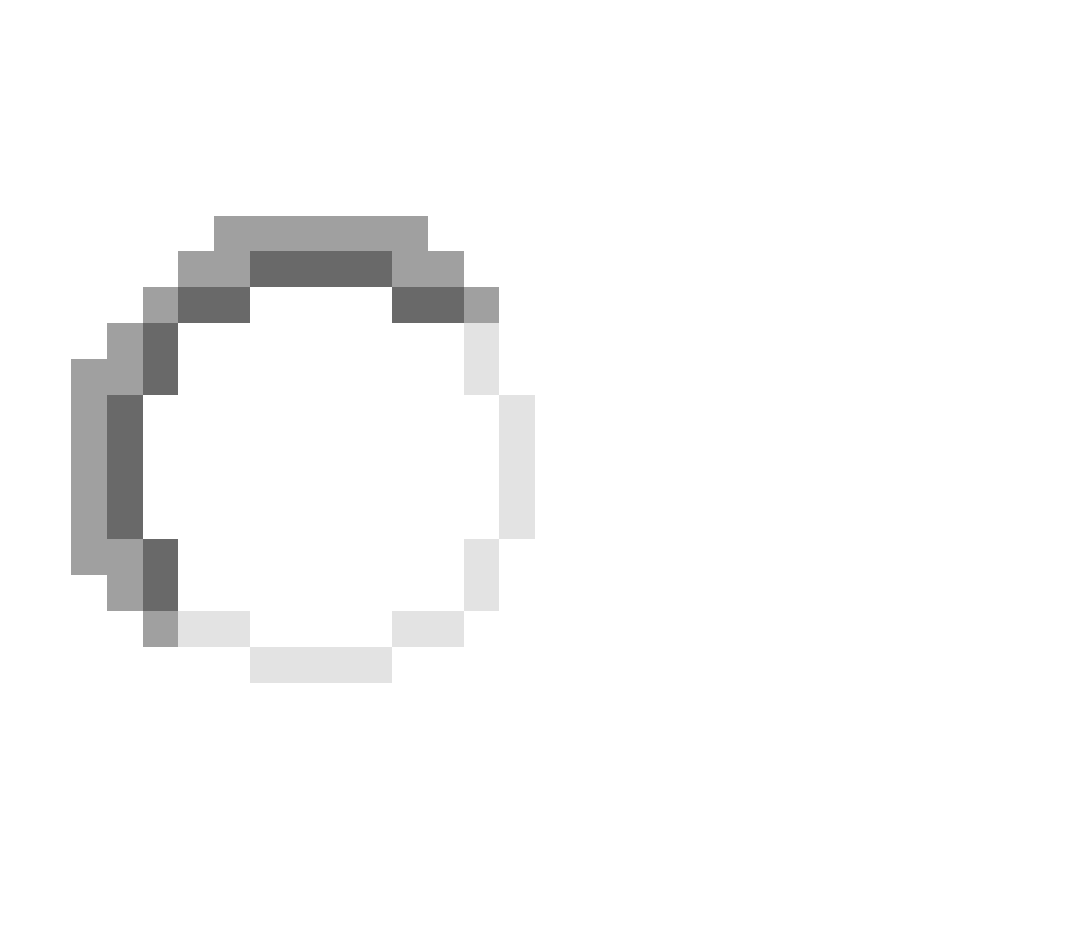
|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Themes | Subtheme | Supporting Quotations |
| Answered yes.  with explanation why Participants felt that parents choose according to values taught |
| 1 Personal development of child, according to Parental values | Personality  Life lessons  Parental personal values | **P37** ‘Yes, it was because parents are focus on children’s personality development. Most of the parents think that learning good values can let children have a well personality development.’  **P27** ‘Yes, because they want their child could grow to be what they want and they may think the school could help them (P27 also mentions being academic, forest school and growing up happy)’  **P26** ‘Yes, because Kindergarten is the 2nd home to their child, that their child may learn a lot of life values in here, so this is why they based on values taught there’.  **P18** ‘Yes, it is because those values are the parents want to teach their children, they want their children can learn these positive values in kindergarten.  **P17** ‘Yes, thy will have different requirements based of different culture and background, and parents will consider their child personality.’  **P16** ‘Yes, it is because the parents hope their children can learn correct values in kindergarten.’  **P9** ‘Yes, because they hope that the school can teach their children these values, to ensure their children can develop as well.’  **P6** ‘Some of them, parents want their children to build up a correct value or positive attitude since childhood.’  **P5** ‘Yes, the parent concern learning more, but they still hope their children develop balance. They care the children’s moral development because it will affect their courtesy and may get other people complaint.’  **P1** ‘Yes, I think parents would choose a particular kindergarten based on values taught there because parents want their children to learn the particular values when they are studying in kindergarten.’  **P38** ‘Yes, they want their child to learn the values that they think is important, so they based on the values taught there to choose a particular kindergarten.’  **P63** ‘Yes, they do it is because they want their children learn those values.’  **P61 ‘**Yes, because those values are positive impact on children.’  **P60** ‘Of course they will, except the parents, teachers are also the role model of the children. Parents want their children to be good. They will find the school which shared similar or even the same values with themselves in order to teach their children cooperatively.’  **P58** ‘Yes, I think parents will choose a particular kindergarten because parents have certain expectations for their children. If parents fail to teach their children and kindergarten can teach it, then parents will choose that particular kindergarten.’  **P56** ‘Yes, it is because parents believe children’s character formation are influenced by kindergarten.’  **P55** ‘Yes, it is because parents expect children can learn those values in the kindergarten, as kindergarten is children’s second home.’  **P54** ‘Some parents who is professional will choose the school based on values, but most of low education level parents will choose convenient location.’  **P19** ‘Yes, because these values are important for children’s moral development.’  **P53** ‘Yes, they may choose the kindergarten based on values and beliefs, as they think children always listen to the teachers and they want to choose same values/beliefs of the kindergarten.’  **P52** ‘Yes the parents will base on the values to choose the school, the parents have the expectation of children to learn and cultivate these values, so the parents will choose the kindergarten which can provide the learning environment for children to learn the values.’  **P15** ‘Yes, because nowadays parents more focus on children moral development.’  **P31** ‘Yes, Parents hope that children can learn the values in the kindergarten.’  **P32** ‘Yes because parents may have their own values, and they want to teach their children to have the same values as themselves. So that the parents will tend to choose the kindergarten with the same values of them.’  **P39** ‘Yes, I think parents may do this, it is because values are more important than any knowledge, be humble every day, respect everyone, no racist.  **P40** ‘Yes, because they may not know much about the core of the kindergarten, so they may choose a kindergarten based on the values taught there and they know what the kindergarten will teach.’  **P43** ‘To nurture and help the child grow-up to be a physically fit ad happy child, and become socially and emotionally adapted….(followed by-also in future education ) But in Hong Kong, most of the parents are focus the result because it will affect the progression problem (Primary school).’  **P57** ‘Its because parents want the kindergarten to teach children with the same idea, for example the parent want their children to learn self-care, they would choose the kindergarten which pay attention to children’s self-care.’  **P59** ‘Yes, because parents consider that kindergarten based on these values, their children will stay there 3-4 years to learn and study, therefore parents may consider this.  **P62** ‘Yes, the parents think kindergarten is more important place. It will teach the child different knowledge, skills, values. If the kindergarten values the same as parents, they will identify the school it teaches more.’  **P45** ‘Yes, HK kids lack time to learn self-care, enjoy learning, willing to explore, having a poor attitude at learning. Parents to be spoon feeding at the education policy nowadays. They need educate by kindergarten which have hope, love, and change them and also their kids.’ |
| 2. Religion | Religion and cultural background | **P35** ‘Yes, May be based on their religion, because parents want their children to have the same religion.  **P34** ‘Yes, the parents will check the kindergartens background, its suitable for their child, maybe the religion or curriculum and teaching skills’.  **P17** ‘Yes, thy will have different requirements based of different culture and background, and parents will consider their child personality.’  **P8** ‘Maybe, some may emphasise on the values of religions……’  **P47** ‘If education level is low parents choose Kindergarten nearby home, that’s ok. If education level is high, there might be concern about their own faith. |
| 3. Curriculum/  Teaching qualifications | Skills  Fame (well known for academic achievement)  Future education | **P34** ‘Yes, the parents will check the kindergartens background, its suitable for their child, maybe the religion or curriculum and teaching skills’.  **P28 ‘**HK Parent seem more likely to choose a kindergarten with good qualities teachers and support’.  **P14** ‘Fame, curriculum planning’  **P13** ‘Some parents choose the kindergarten which is famous (academic achievement, good name).’  **P8** ‘…..I think most of the parents are concerning the curriculum/activities through different teaching methods or materials. Therefore, it helps their children to participant into a good school.’  **P21** ‘Yes because teacher have tis responsibility’.  **P24** ‘Yes parent will choose the kindergarten based on what they want their children to learn.’  **P43 ‘…..**But in Hong Kong, most of the parents are focus the result because it will affect the progression problem (Primary school)’ |
| 4. Attainment as a value |  | **P25 ‘**Yes, one of the concerns (of parents) is that different kindergarten have different core values, aims and curriculum. Parents may take that values as a concern, but I think most of them will choose school based on the goodwill of it and the percentage of graduated from kindergarten and entry to band one primary school. Kindergarten graduate who can affect children easy (*This can impact on which Primary school children can attend*)  **P3** ‘Yes, because this can ensure their children can achieve what they (parents) want, also they can let children to be successful person in the future.’  **P51** ‘Yes, I think parents choose a particular kindergarten based on the values taught there, it is because some parents may have low education level so they believe that teachers who are educated can help to teach their children, so that their children can be a ‘good boy’ or ‘good girl’ in the future.’ |
|  |  |  |
| Themes | Subtheme | Supporting Quotations |
| Answered No  with explanation why Participants felt that parents did not choose according to values taught |  |  |
| Academic attainment | Curriculum  Teaching style  Academic level to gain access to primary school | **P36** ‘No, in Hong Kong parents are more concern on the curriculum of academia’  **P33** ‘No, most of the people of Hong Kong want their children to learn more.  **P27** ‘some traditional parents who want their child to learn more academic things’.  **P23** ‘No, Parent will choose a kindergarten by their ranking, activities, and their teaching quality. Parents are more care the language development of their child.’  **P12** ‘not all, since they want their child to enter a good elementary, primary/secondary school therefore they may find a school which is a famous school.’  **P4** ‘No, parents may just consider which kindergarten school can improve their children’s academic level…..’  **P11** ‘No, they value academic achievement.’  **P2** ‘No, parent choose a particular kindergarten mostly based on the kindergartens performance in academic, parents mostly like the kindergarten which can provide more homework and exercise, also parent consider about if the kindergarten can let their child study at famous primary school.’  **P46** ‘the academic achievement of the school before, e.g. the percentage of getting no 1 primary school.  P50 ‘No, I think they base on the teaching method. Parent focus on children academic result and their ability. They ask a lot of question about their ability.’  **P41** ‘Could be based on the reputation of the school/teachers.  **P10** ‘No, they will choose some high grade in academic linked with kindergarten.’  **P30**: ‘No, some parents look for the qualification of the teacher and the teaching method such as Reggio, Montessori etc, also parents’ social status will affect their choice of kindergarten’  **P44** ‘No, they look for the progression, parent common and location of kindergarten.’  **P48** ‘location of kindergarten and school values’  **P49** ‘No, the parents choose a kindergarten only based on the school teaching methods or school resources because the parent more focus on their child academic.’ |
| Acceptance of values | Parental values  Indifferent to values | **P28** ‘Every people have different values; ppl are easier to accept the same value’.  **P4** ‘….I think parents should choose a particular kindergarten according to the values taught there, because academic level is not represent to everything. Those values such as confident, sharing… still important to their life journey.’  **P46** ‘Most are not based on values but on neighbouring housing (*accessibility to kindergarten)*  **P42** ‘other neighbours options (*of Kindergartens in the locality*)  **P7** ‘because they feel their mind is best. ‘(*parental choice*)  P65 ‘Hope there will not be conflict and have communication problem between kindergarten and parents.’ |

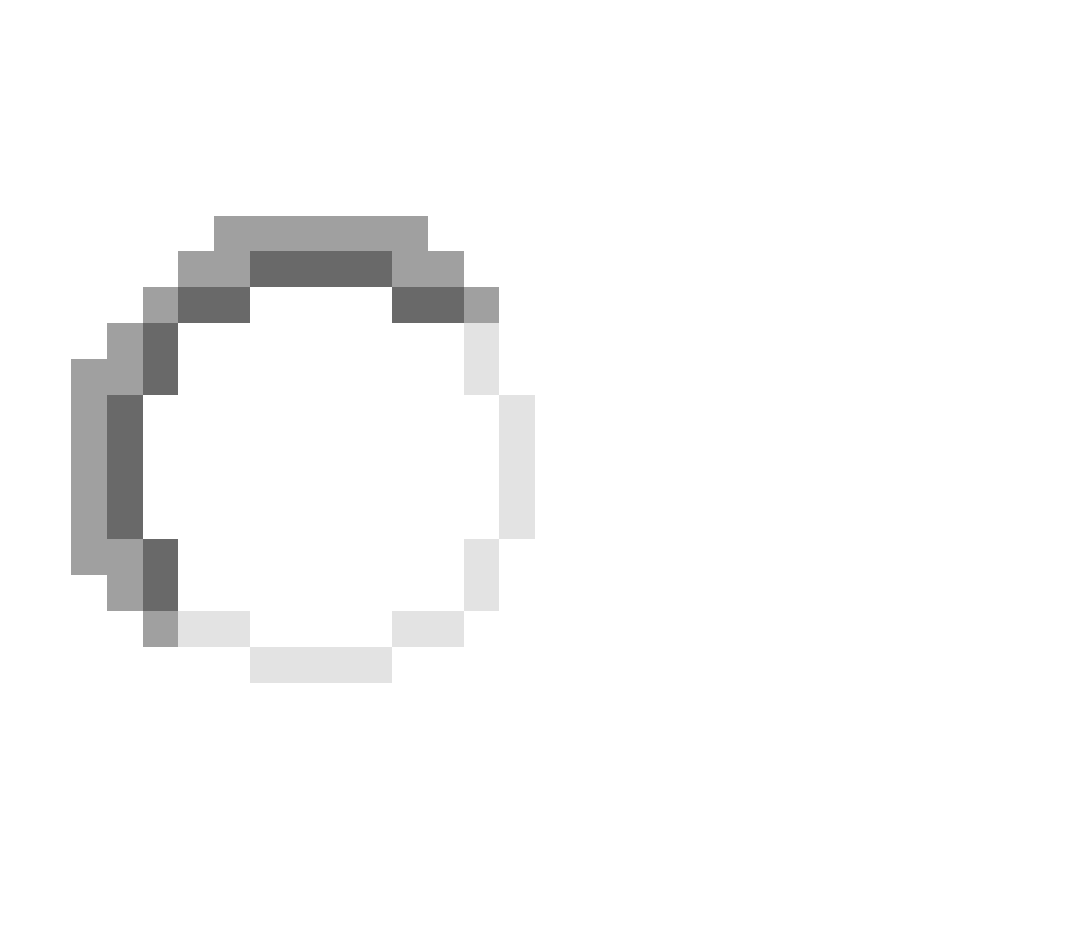
Appendix 8 A: Parent questionnaire questions.

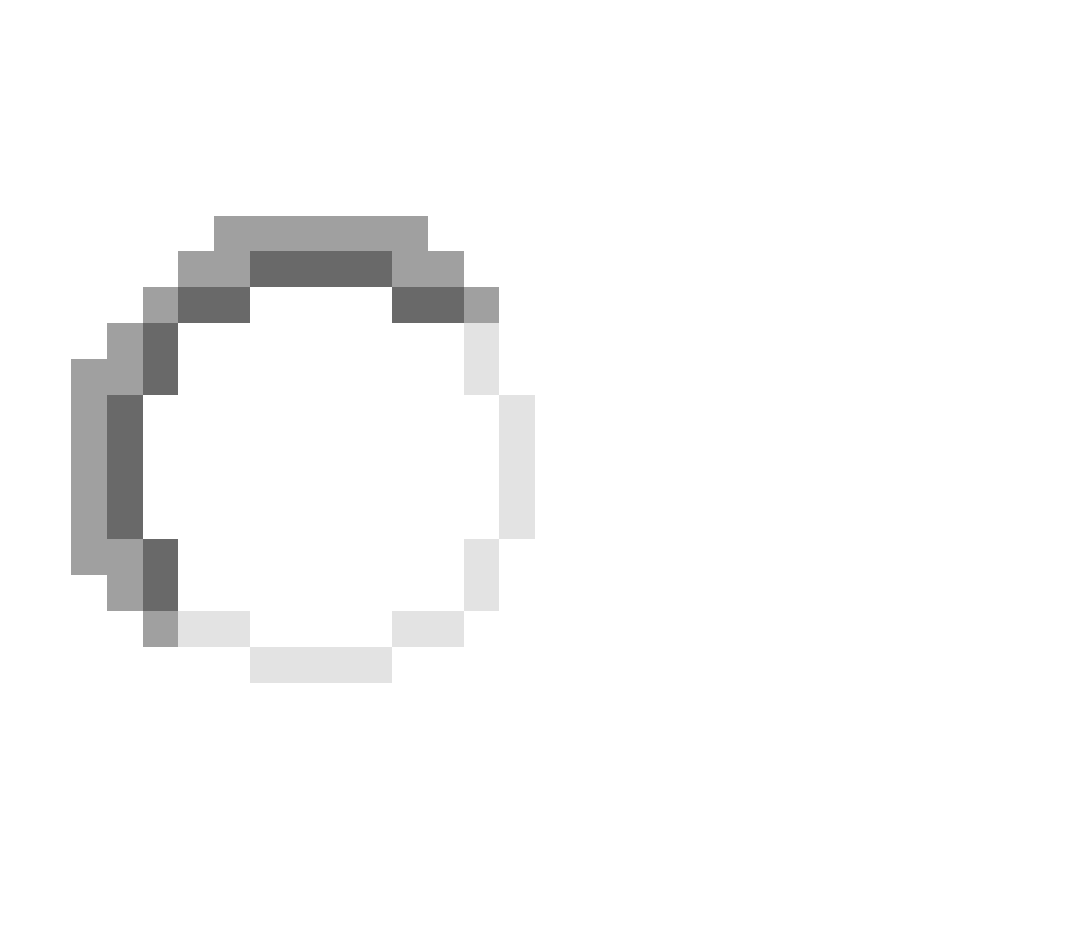
1. How old is your child?
2. Does your child attend a kindergarten or nursery?
3. How did you choose the kindergarten/nursery your child attends?
4. What values do you want the Kindergarten/Nursery to teach your child?
5. Which of the following Values do you find important for your child?

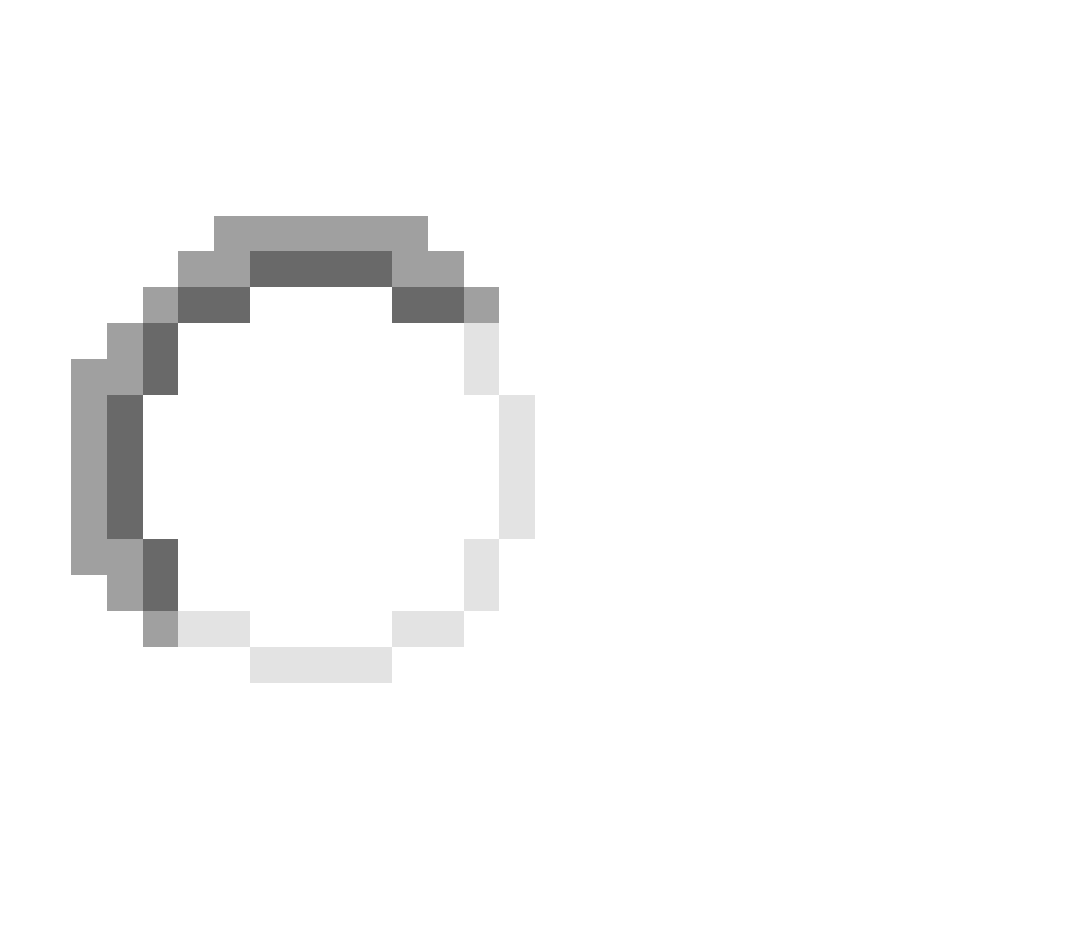
Personal Values

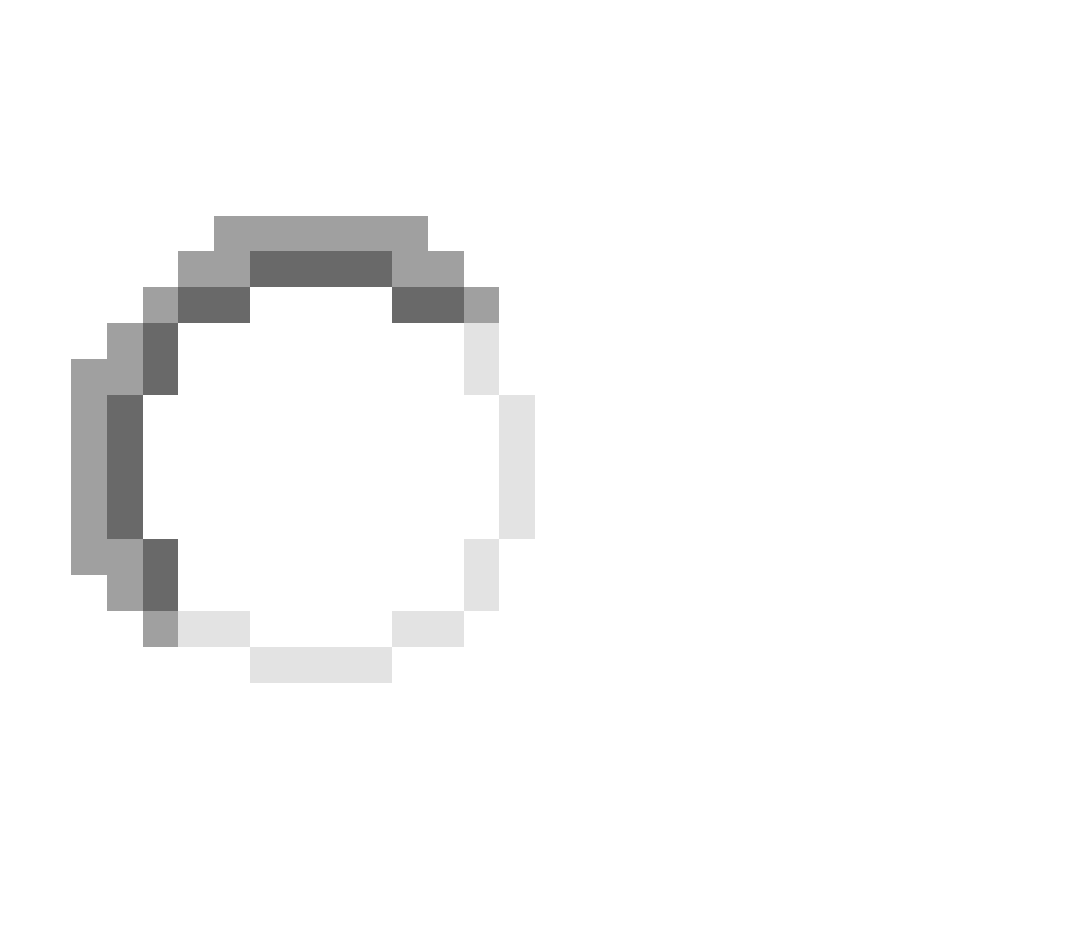
Religion

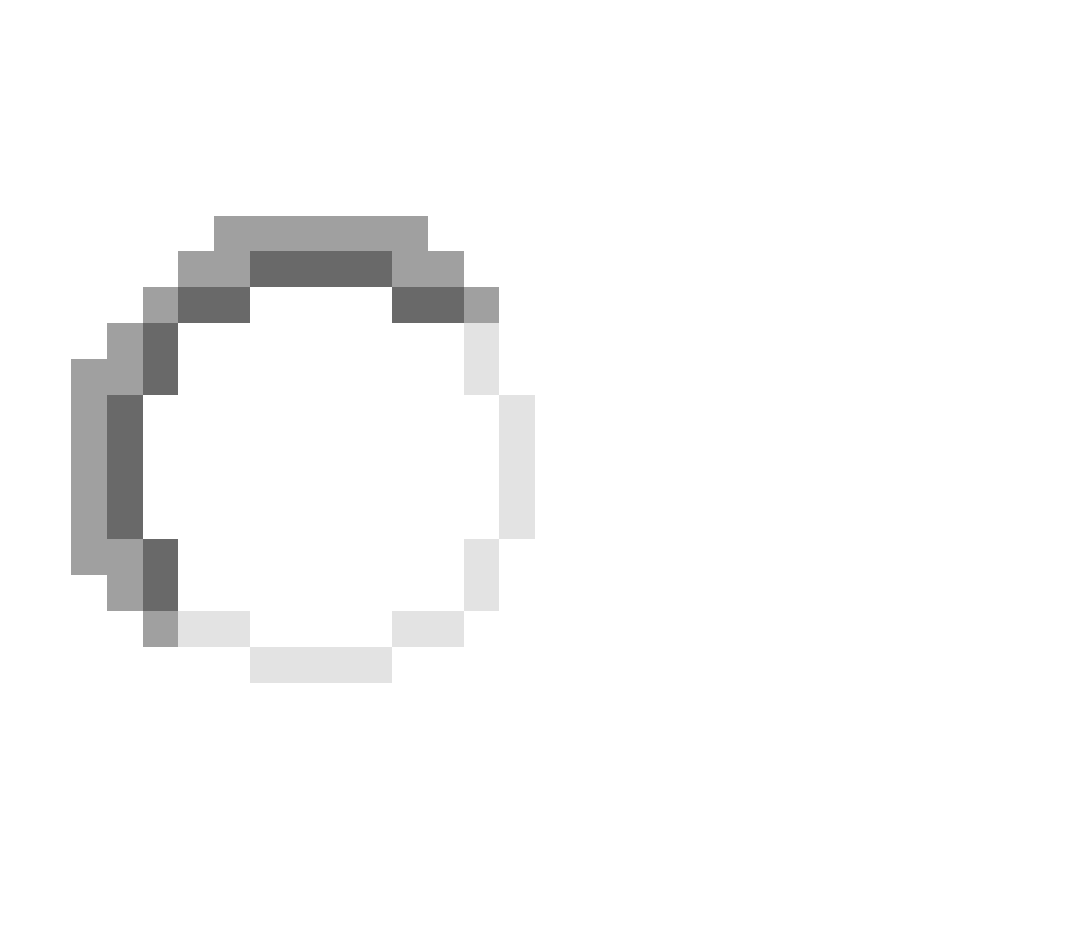
Educational Attainment/achievement

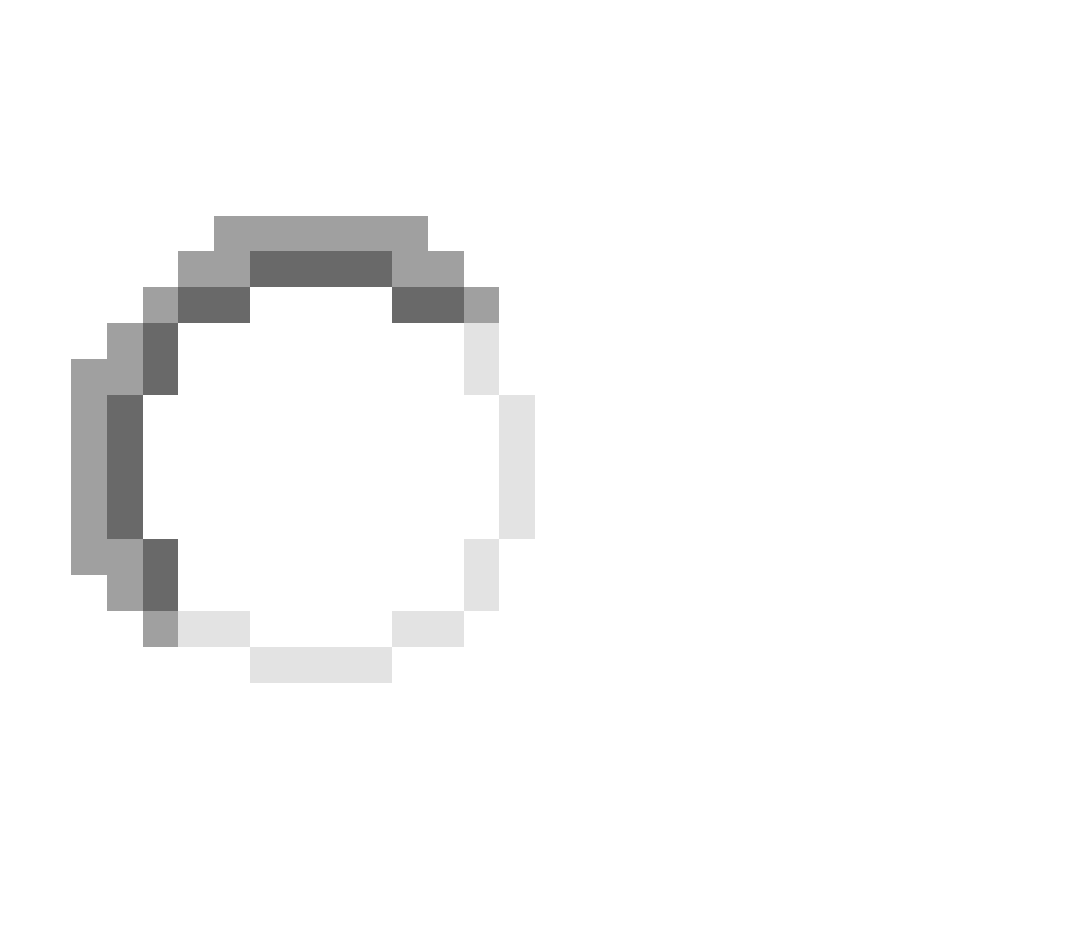
Respect

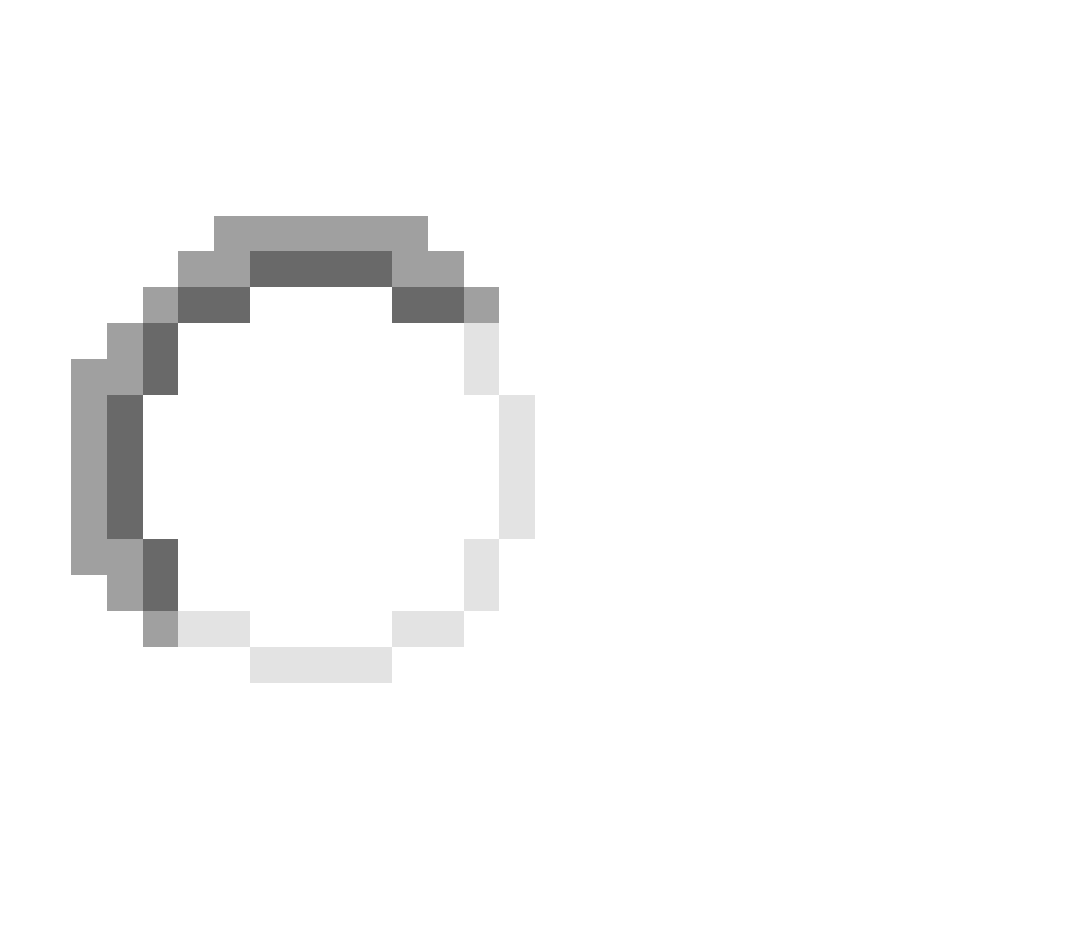
Honesty

Politeness

Love

responsibility

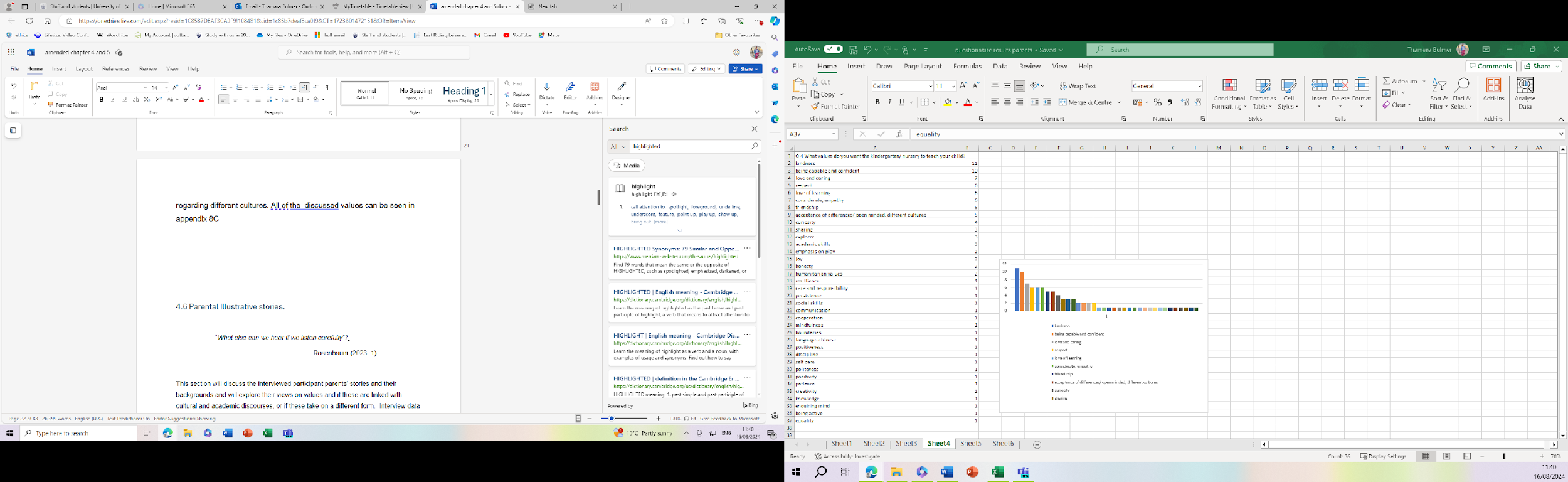
Independence

other

1. If you choose other, can you tell me what it is you find important for your child?
2. How far do you travel to take your child to Kindergarten/Nursery?
3. Would you be willing to take part in a short interview to discuss this further? If so please leave your email address and I will contact you.

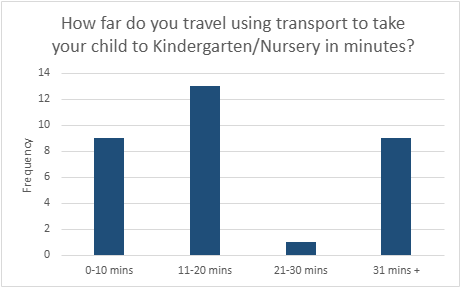
Appendix 8 B How did you choose the kindergarten your child attends?

Appendix 8 C What values do you want the kindergarten/ nursery to teach your child? (Top answers and full answers)



Appendix 8 D Which of the following values do you find important for your child?

Appendix 8 E How far do you travel to take your child to kindergarten/nursery?



Appendix 9 a Example of part of one of the interviews with initial colour coding and all transcripts of interviews.

Language and culture,

academic approaches,

choice of kindergarten,

multicultural inclusivity and acceptance,

curriculum

kindergarten interviews,

social skills

wider observations

Well basically because we are, well both me and my husband are from the UK, well I’m from Northern Ireland and my husband was originally from Essex, but he emigrated to Australia so we both met here and basically we wanted our children to have a really good understanding of Chinese – the language- so we did not want to put our children in an international school, first of all its very pricey and we wanted our children to be in the local government system, like I can speak Chinese but I can’t read and write it, you know being born in the UK I didn’t get much of a chance to have any outside education of Chinese, that was the first and formal thing as to why we choose a local government kindergarten here in Hong Kong, but the second one was we didn’t want a kindergarten that was too set, because it is very different from the UK, I trained in the UK as a teacher and its very academically driven here in HK and we wanted a kindergarten that was going to set our children up as well rounded individual , so not too pushy but also not too airy fairy as well so have a chance of getting to a good school if that makes sense, into a good primary school. The system works very differently over here so that’s another thing.

I really like the Principle, we know her quite well, she does a little work with our university and she has got good values, all about healthy eating and parent teacher relationships and also she is very very respectful of people of different backgrounds as well, some kindergartens have been known, especially local kindergartens have been known to be quite prejudiced against say if you are a foreigner and you are looking to take on the Chinese language, they are like, ‘well you don’t even speak Chinese so why would I even give you a chance, we don’t have the kind of man power to support you’ kind of thing. So, this (the one we choose) is a lovely community kindergarten.

So, did you look at quite a few then before you choose this one? or was it just this one that you knew about?

We actually applied, for him we applied for about 4, and they were all kind of similar values and they are all around my local area as well, so yeah, but this one was definitely my first choice, it is very competitive here as well, all children go through interview system and its really really crazy compared to the UK system and also we had a lot of preparation to do, but yeah, so we had about four or five choices

Appendix 9 B Transcripts of interviews

Copy of interview anonymised.

Background info Pseudonym Esther

Esther has 2 children and is a lecturer at the Education university in HK delivering Early Childhood courses to teaching assistants on the diploma course. Esther is studying towards a master's in human Rights.

Difficulty connecting via google hangout, lots of interference so moved to Zoom, this did interrupt the interview, and it was difficult to understand and having to repeat questions a lot.

**Part 1 google hangout.**

Missed first part of conversation in recording due to technical issues.

So, you said you have two children?

Yes I have two boys, my eldest is 5 and my youngest is 2, ok and do they both go to a kindergarten or…

Yes, well my eldest goes to a kindergarten, so he is in K2, what we call K2 which is reception year and my youngest goes to playgroup.

Ok, so what I am trying to find out for my research is what values you as a parent feel are important for your children, so part of that is for me to try and find out why you choose a particular kindergarten and if there is something specific about the values within that kindergarten

Well basically because we are, well both me and my husband are from the UK, well I’m from Northern Ireland and my husband was originally from Essex, but he emigrated to Australia so we both met here and basically we wanted our children to have a really good understanding of Chinese – the language- so we did not want to put our children in an international school, first of all its very pricey and we wanted our children to be in the local government system, like I can speak Chinese but I can’t read and write it, you know being born in the UK I didn’t get much of a chance to have any outside education of Chinese, that was the first and formal thing as to why we choose a local government kindergarten here in Hong Kong, but the second one was we didn’t want a kindergarten that was too set, because it is very different from the UK, I trained in the UK as a teacher and its very academically driven here in HK and we wanted a kindergarten that was going to set our children up as well rounded individual , so not too pushy but also not too airy fairy as well so have a chance of getting to a good school if that makes sense, into a good primary school. The system works very differently over here so that is another thing.

I really like the Principle, we know her quite well, she does a little work with our university and she has got good values, all about healthy eating and parent teacher relationships and also she is very very respectful of people of different backgrounds as well, some kindergartens have been known, especially local kindergartens have been known to be quite prejudiced against say if you are a foreigner and you are looking to take on the Chinese language, they are like, ‘well you don’t even speak Chinese so why would I even give you a chance, we don’t have the kind of man power to support you’ kind of thing. So, this (the one we choose) is a lovely community kindergarten.

So, did you look at quite a few then before you choose this one? or was it just this one that you knew about?

We actually applied, for him we applied for about 4, and they were all kind of similar values and they are all around my local area as well, so yeah, but this one was definitely my first choice, it is very competitive here as well, all children go through interview system and its really really crazy compared to the UK system and also we had a lot of preparation to do, but yeah, so we had about four or five choices

So, will your second child go to the same kindergarten?

Yes, because obviously when you have a sibling you get a place, so he will start K1 which is nursery in the UK in September

Right ok, so you already have a place for him there, that is good.

So, do you think it is quite important then that the kindergarten already looks at the academic side of the children because you have mentioned academic several times, do you think that is more important or just impo9rtant alongside other values?

To me this is the issue unfortunately, even though I am an early years educator and I’m all about learning through play etc etc and this is like my forte and I have been drummed by my lecturers etc but in order to survive Hong Kong and in order to survive the education system here in HK my husband and I had to take a look at thing and go you know what, realistically if we want our children to get into a good school and give them a good foundation and backing with their Chinese language and mathematics and everything else, we have to sort of come to that compromise and you know it wasn’t an easy decision to make but it seems it’s the only way to get them into a good education. We wanted to balance it with half day kindergarten, yeah you do your academic studies etc etc, but we want them to have that creative free play with us at home and we would take them out for different experiences and stuff so you know that how we balance it, but yes so to answer your question it *(academic*) is important

Yes and you say you are a teacher yourself; do you think because you are a teacher you would think differently (about academic stuff)

Frozen

As a teacher do you think you might think differently about the education and the values you want your child to learn in life

UUUHHHMMM I think if I wasn’t a teacher I probably would uuuhhmm I wouldn’t think about it as much I think, how to balance the play, the creativity the academic side because I probably wouldn’t be as educated in it, but I think I would still choose the same school, probably because it a very well-known school more information but breaking up

We then moved on to Zoom, very interruptive as we could not really speak clearly, and information was lost.

**Part 2 zoom**

General chat

So, let me go back to the academic bits then, you say it is important to you that your children learn academic aspects which ones do you think are the most important ones that they learn?

Frozen…

So, you were saying that academia is important,…… so why is it so important for you? why do you want your children to do well in academia.

Well basically it’s because of the competition here to get into good schools, they basically look at children’s academia, their level and performance and this is unfortunately it is one of those things where the best schools so the best banding schools, kind of like your grammar schools back in the UK, kind of similar where you pass the 11+ you go into a good school. That is why the academic part is quite important to me and to us, so that is why it’s very important for me to get my boys into a good school.

So, by choosing a particular kindergarten does that mean they can get into a better school? Does it matter which kindergarten they go to uuuuhhhhmmm it does, well they say it doesn’t but it actually does, they normally look at kindergartens who have fairly good statistics, that will bring children sort of into the better schools, it’s a very competitive cut throat industry here in Hong Kong.

Do you think that by choosing the right kindergarten now that that has a really big impact on their life later on, like for their prospects of getting a job or… what are you hoping the impact will be?

I think I really believe it will set them up for a good grounding, for a better school, for better prospects really, that’s why they say start them early and I really do believe that, giving your child the right opportunity for the right footing into the right Kindergarten, into the right primary and into the right secondary school you give them more chance the succeed. Now I’m not saying that if you choose a kindergarten that isn’t for example as well known or the academia isn’t as good that children cannot succeed, I’m not saying that, but it does give you a better footing, or give my children a better footing.

So, what other sort of values would you like your children to have? Because you mentioned Chinese values you said earlier on, what do you mean by Chinese values?

Ye, what sort of values other than the Chinese, definitely being kind, that is the one thing I think that (laughs), I think the generation now is completely different to my generation, you know about manners, kindness, empathy, socialising, learning how to work as a team, these things are all very important to me and my husband and that we…, you know learning to not take things for granted as well. I think the sort of values that my parents and my husband’s parents have put into us you know they are quite old school, you know mind your P’s and Q’s, respecting elders and learning how to empathise, helping the people who need the help the most, I think we see a very different generation and we want to instil all those sort of values in our children and I would like , basically an education system that would set similar sort of standards as ourselves but we are in a different culture to how I have been brought up, even though I’m Chinese and my parents are from Hong Kong, the culture is slightly different although there are some things that are similar there are many things that are very different as well. Its ensuring that the kids get the values and things we want at home as well as school.

So, what would you class as specific Chinese values? because a lot of the values you have mentioned now could be classed as values that are held worldwide, so what would be a specifically Chinese values?

Uuhhhmmm plus as Chinese values I would say, Chinese values are uuhhmm the culture here not so much….well Chinese culture is based on you have got to have respect for your elders, that is a very very strong value, but I’m seeing a real shift in the way people are now, it’s not as important these days and in this younger generation, not like compared to mine , you always make sure you call auntie, uncle you know etc now I don’t really see that being pushed as much as it was before and I would have said that was one of the main things is respecting your elders. So, we are teaching that at home and yes they are teaching that at school as well. And also here in Asia, I think family is a big one, being close to your family being respectful to your family, looking out for each other you know, it’s a very collective culture here, compared to say the West, here it is as a collective, as a whole people would live with their families until they get married and even after they got married they probably still live with their families , I mean a lot of that is because of the price of property here, it’s very expensive to live here, so yes those values still exist, but I think they are not as strong as what they were as say in my generation and the generation before me

yes, why do you think that is?

There is a real shift I think in the world as a whole, I think a lot of it has got to do with the advancement of technology, that has got a huge part to play, the globalisation and the accessibility to various information’s from around the world, you know, taking things for granted as well, things are so easy now, compared to… I remember going to university and having to go to the library and getting physical books out, here you just google everything, its super super different and I think people are losing that sense of understanding hard work yes yes I agree.

frozen

If the kindergarten where your son goes now and your younger child will go soon, if they could add anything or change anything any values or anything they could add to what they already deliver, what would that be?

I would like, probably like to add a little bit more play, like free play into the curriculum, even if it is just for 20 minutes a day extra, I mean they do get the element of free play but it’s probably like…I don’t know… 40 min a week or something, it’s not enough, because curriculums are so packed here. This is not even one of the most academically strict schools, it’s not its very well rounded, but I think in terms of play most Hong Kong schools have a lot to do in terms of improving their play times and managing that.

Do you think that might be linked to… and I am asking you this because you are an early year’s teacher, do you think that might be linked to the governments approach to play-based learning? Because I know in the EDB they have added several years ago that they want to include more play-based approach

Frozen

So, I just repeat your question so what I can gather is it linked to the governments expectations as to what they want,

Actually no its not, if you look at the early years curriculum they are very pretty on paper but it’s very vague very wishy washy and you know it is very unlike the EYFS in the UK where you have a set of standards to tick off, what they have covered etc, here it’s just like a general document and because of the level of competition, here kindergartens are, especially private ones, they have free reign as to how much they want to push children, you have got 4- 5 year olds probably writing in paragraphs, reciting this that and the other, which is not what my son does by the way, my sons kindergarten follows quite closely by what the government wants which is very well rounded which is good as they have a good leader and the principle is really really good, she is trained in Australia as well, so I would say diversity and multiculturalism is the thing that is very lacking here in Hong Kong. There is a lot of racial discrimination, there is a lot of racial prejudice and I’m actually Doing my MA in Human Rights with the University of London at the moment so this is a topic that is very close to my heart and there is a lot of flaws and I would like to see that being implemented more into the curriculum as well as putting it a little bit more at the forefront and that what they need to work on. I mean its 8-10% of the population that make up the ethnic minority here in Hong Kong and that is actually quite a lot, so they still have a lot of work to do.

You know what is funny, I have interviewed 6 people now and I have all asked them that question if they wanted to change something and all of them have talked about diversity and they wanted more information or really and they are all from Hong Kong? Yes, I’m so surprised that that is what has come up every single time, that shows that as a group of parents as well as educators as there was another lady who was also an educator like yourself, that you have very similar ideas of what you want for your children

General chat about job Angela works at the Education University

Appendix 9 c

Interview Nick

I expected his wife, but she was unable to attend on the agreed time, so Husband Nick stepped in.

Initially it was not clear that Nick had not answered the questionnaire until much later on in the interview.

Introductions then…

I can see form the questionnaire you filled in that you have a two-year-old, is it a boy or a girl?

Oh, a yeah, I have a two-year-old and I also have a six and a half year old.

re they boy’s girls or one of each?

Eaeeh I got two boys, two boys lovely, so I assume your six-year-old is at school, did they both got to the same kindergarten?

No No not at all because my older one is in the primary school now and my younger one is in nursery at the moment then not understandable language.

So how did you choose that nursery for your younger son?

Eehm basically it is down to the school background, we go through various way of research, for example the background of the school as well as some information provided by the parents, and we also choose the philosophy of the school looks like

So what philosophy were you specifically looking at then?

It all depends on how the ??? take like the attitude as well as how they do on a daily basis, since both of me are quite like outgoing, like my younger one so we are choosing one of the school like has more activity rather than academic.

So, was that more important to you than the academic side?

Ehm I think in 21st century like all kinds of information and all kinds of education are maybe on the interactive rather than the academic such as books and writing and on how to speak. My expectation nowadays is as the time goes they know how to write words, they know how to say in Chinese or English or whatsoever, so I expect the school we choose for them is mainly more interactive with person, like more activity, more interaction between people yeah ok , they need to learn some social skills at the early stage of their life, I think that is more important than academic

So, the nursery you choose does it link in with the primary school?

Eeehhhm the one I choose for my younger one not, we just need to go through the process when we need a primary school to choose, so yeah…

Because I know that a lot of parents choose a nursery that links in with the primary school, so they know when a school links in with higher education and further education…

Yes that correct, I think every parent in HK they really want to focus on choosing the school all the way through to secondary school yeah as you know the chance is quite slim, you need to go through various stages of interviews and so on and so on , it’s not all down to the tutors performance in some way, it’s all down to luck in some way in particular in this year interview process since we cannot meet the teacher in person (Covid restrictions) so we can’t really show the children’s ability as well as some of the other positive way in front of the teacher, during the interview process they need to recall various kind of video to provide to the teacher, in person so I don’t feel it really show my kids talent in some way..

Ok no no, so did your child need to go for an interview then for the nursery he is at?

I took my younger one to interview once, in fact he was Doing much better than when recording an interview or during a zoom session, because I’m sure you are aware the kids like sitting in front of the screen and so on and then they just cannot pay attention, but when they sit in front of the teacher during the interview, he actually sit down and then he can listen to the teacher asking him to ask for, request a teacher as like what colour is this and so on yeah so I think it is much better in person, yes it a bit more personal if you see someone face to face in real life rather than on a screen that’s correct, and I think especially for a two year old that is quite difficult. Yes indeed that is correct because you really can’t control him like , sit down properly and so on yeah well from an older one from six year old of course he will understand what I try and tell him, you can tell him to do so and so it’s very difficult to control hm in some way

So when you choose that nursery, are there particular values that you want that nursery to teach your son, well as I said earlier we choose the school we basically believed in the philosophy of teaching , I expect the school we choose for him is really give him a shot on more social skills, meet more people, more interactive, we believe the philosophy and that is why we choose that school yeah ok, thanks

Just in life which values are important to you? Just generally in life for your children?

Well I always say to my Mrs I prefer children grow to become a good person, like not good personality but I would say just like a normal good behaviour person other than well-educated and then he , we end up with like a genius criminal or whatever, most importantly he needs to behave himself, that is life business. You know education wise, you can do education at 40 or 50, I’m still Doing some sort of courses, I’m working as well so yeah that is the way told my kid, it’s like you need to show your best way in a general person, but if you ask me do we need an education in a good quality, yes, but if I got a choice I prefer them to become a normal nice person instead

Yeah yeah, so at the nursery do they tell you what values they teach? You know do they talk about different values.

7.58 min Hmmm I am not too sure about this one to be honest.

No because some nurseries will say, this month we are talking about being kind or being resilient or curious or anything like that, do they talk about anything like that?

I think in some way they told the kid you know you got to be kind to each other as well as share things out, I think that is the very fundamental way to learn how to become a more sociable person.

Do you think there are some cultural aspects involved, do you think generally in Hong Kong in nurseries they teach the same things, or do you think HK has a specific culture where different values are taught?

To be honest I do not think there will be much difference, if a teacher has a different kind of skill set to teach the kid? I think that all kids in HK are receiving an equivalent level of education in the early stage.

Yeah because I know there is a lot of different types of kindergarten, sort of religious ones, international ones.

Yeah I believe there might be some way because if you choose a Catholic one or a Buddha one that will be a completely different religion concept but since local kindergarten or international kindergarten , the difference is just their syllabus/ curriculum, so I think if we decide to choose the local kindergarten then I don’t see any sort of differences.

Ok good, do you think later on in life there is some academic competitiveness, like where your child has gone to school is there some competitiveness for jobs or anything like that.

Yes indeed, I think even nowadays people will really label those in older age, like which Uni you end up with as a start of the career , yes in some way competitive for the jobs, definitely but as the time goes more work experience, more connection, more relationship with people, education wise I don’t think is necessary it’s just the entry ticket for your career basically

Yeah yeah so you wouldn’t have chosen a nursery to sort of already start thinking of your children’s prospects in the future?

Not really because I think it’s too early to talk about career, because when I was young I wanted to become a spaceman, but I am an IT engineer so I’m still in a scientific level of a career. At the end of the day, it’s up to a child to decide to be what he want to be. I mean nowadays people think of I mean in real life you need to think of your earnings, at the end of the day if they really have a choice I want them to make their own decision on wat they want to do at the end of the day.

Yeh ok that’s really nice.

So, if you think of the nursery where your sone goes what impact do you think that nursery has on your sone future, so if it is not n an academic or a job future what other impact may they have on your child’s future.

Maybe they learn for cultures because maybe depends which school you go to you meet different people and different kinds of teachers, so basically wherever you go whichever kind of school, just like my oldest son is in primary school, he goes to a local primary school, now there is a lot of mainland students so he may have some sort of interaction with those kids obviously so some kind of additional languages like Mandarin he may hear and he will learn from them, one social impact. Obviously if you got to international school you will feel you will have similar kinds of experiences and that is just one example, I can tell.

Yeah ok, in the questionnaire that you filled in (turned out later it was his wide who completed the questionnaire) you said you wanted your child to be self-confident, what did you mean by that?

Self-confident is, you need to learn how to do things right in order to gain your confidence, if you see those teenagers for example they lack self-confidence because they cannot suffer the failure.

I prefer my kids learn from their mistakes, if you know your mistake you gain the experience and at the end of the day you gain confidence to do the job again or similar kind of job at the end of the day yeah so that is quite important to gain self confidence

So, for you if your child fails at something it’s not a negative but it’s a learning process.

Yes for others point of view yes, I do feel frustrated when my kid does something wrong but positively that’s just one of the lessons learned.

So, in that sense its quite positive to fail sometimes as you learn from that.

Yes as a parent we need to prepare for those crash landings sometimes, you know smash things up and then broken things sometimes, so parents need to learn how to control temper but at this point, well I’m still learning at this point to be honest.

So, you say about controlling temper, do you think that’s a cultural thing that you feel you have to learn to control……

Yes I do think so because on my mum and dad’s generation they really are using their old way to teach kids, in that you done something wrong you end up with some sort of physical punishment yeah

But for my generation when I teach my kid I try to keep myself cool, physical punishment is not an option yeah it’s really a differ kind of way of teaching a kid when they grow.

Do you think that is related to Confucian values or is that just a… or is that not really related?

No it’s just like culture we need our culture because throughout the history those people in HK basically learn from the old ways, slightly old school, you know when you done something wrong in my day they hit your head, if you fail your exam you get punishment. Our generation when we teach kids basically like I say, learn from mistake if you only get 70% of your exam it’s not the end of the world, you need to really guide then and say try to improve a bit next time not telling him or telling him you screw up for example because you only got 70 , the other kids got 75 or 80 and is better than you. I mean people do compare but I think at the end of the day you need to learn; you need to gain your experience, and you need to earn from maybe you didn’t prepare well for the exam so try and do it next time.

Good that sounds like you have a very nice attitude for your children, a very nice supportive, supporting them in learning and growing in that learning.

Yeah like I say earlier, study is not one single day or one single exam, yeas in real life yes but is it the end of your life..no definitely not.

You also said on the questionnaire you wanted the children to be happy in their learning and I think that is coming through now, what would you hope for them to be happy to achieve being happy.

Some of parents are like this, if they choose some of the courses for their kids in the early stage of their age, they choose some of the lessons and push them to the limit to gain the points, like we need to give them a bit more private lesson for improve my maths for instance, yes you might get some sort of achievement in Doing so but the kid might not like it, so mine they don’t like maths for example so I do think in 21st century they have an advantage they have various way to learn. One of the example I can tell is they basically learn things from YouTube and believe it or not my older kid he been watching you tube various time like how to make a bubble, how to making things or even watching toys made, he learn things from there, books cannot tell you how to make a bubble in the early stages, he don’t know what kind of car he is playing or what kind of toys he is playing, I’m some ways he learn things from there, obviously English is one of them, how to speak to me in English in some way, because I mainly speak to him in English so alongside with those additional video and some other stuff he is going through it is totally fine by me if he is in a happy environment to learn things, not really academic but at least he learn some things he might not know later on

17:54 min

But actually, it might be very academic because if he learns about cars then it might very much be he learns about the technical side of cars without even putting the effort in

Yes that is correct, but he might learn how to paint a car for example at 6 years old, I didn’t even learn how to paint a car from the manufacturer until I was 14/15(years old) I thought it was just like some sort of painting work like DIY, but he knows it goes through the manufacturer and then a guy sprays the colour on the car, at 6 years old

Yeah, so actually there are lots of different ways of learning and it does not always have to be the academic but where you sit down at school.

Yes that is correct, I mean book wise in 21st century it can be more supplementary, nowadays information is everywhere, as long as you know how to get it right, I think that is the most important.

At the end of the day, you learn 1+1=2 you learn from the books but there are many ways to represent that 1+1=2

If you could say, the nursery where your youngest child goes, if they could add something, teach something or some sort of development, what would you change or add to what they already do?

I think they should…. Social wise, some other school can do it, like international school do it, for example table manners, how to present yourself properly, that’s perhaps the area where the local school may lack off, because the culture in HK is basically weird, they just chase for the points ok can you explain that? Yes I say if you choose one of the local kindergarten you basically prepare yourself to go to the local primary school yeah, if you are good enough for the next 6 years of your primary school life you might go to a top tier level of the secondary school, which people in HK think ah you are half way of the ??? because if you go to a tier 1 level of the secondary school you have a high chance of going to university obviously if you are a top dog you can become a medic student or you can go to law school that’s what people think of and that’s what caused the ????, but like I said earlier, I want my kid to become a nice person rather than a well-educated criminal, that’s my philosophy as I really emphasis the point is **education is endless**, you always have your second shot at education but becoming a good person you only have one single chance in your life, if you screw it, you screw up, it doesn’t matter how good you are , you are an MP or whatever, if you become a bad guy you end up with nothing

Yeah, so if the Nursery could teach more personal skills like how to behave at the dinner table or how to ….. yes that it so that is something you would change yes.

Is there anything else you want to tell me about what you find important about your children’s early education?

I think the most important thing is , unfortunately due to covid they can’t really go out, I think the important thing is children can go out to various kind of environment like go to the park, Doing some kind of hiking or just Doing some outdoor activity, there is always a positive and negative side of one single item, you can learn things from YouTube for example but they spend far too long in front of tv or stuff and they lack outdoor activity which cause physical level gone down and they are not really outgoing, they just live their live indoor they live their own environment in you tube, on a tablet or even online gaming . That’s the area I really think of they need to become a more outgoing person (he means outdoor play) and be more interactive with people, then you learn things from them you need to give them opportunity to become someone who learn between right and wrong.

Then discussed Forest school and shared information on what this is and send email with the contact details for the FS in HK

Dad then also added he was an IT manager.

Appendix 9 D

Interview Jane 25 minutes

I understand from the Questionnaire you filled in that you have a 4-year-old child.

Yes that right.

Do you have a boy or a girl?

Eh I have a boy.

Ok lovely, and you have said he goes to kindergarten? yes

And he is in the same kindergarten you went to? Yes that is right, I can’t remember what I wrote in there (Questionnaire)

Can you tell me a bit about that, why you have chosen for the kindergarten you used to go to?

Uuuuuhhmmm IIII I think it’s partly its ….uuhhm especially as you know like eh an expat eeehhh who… I have moved into a few different places ok and ehm I like the fact that not many people can … who kind of..have a sort of I guess like have a sort of international upbringing and send their children to the same school so there is definitely that kind of heritage aspect of it

But also having good memories, I remember quite a bit eeeehhm going there and eehhmm so yeah that was a big part of it as well and also still really like the school itself.

Yes, because you travel quite far to go there, well I think it’s quite far, you put 45 minutes on the MTR and a bus journey.

I did yeah, I actually work next door ah that makes sense.

It’s kind of a little bit different I mean, well when there is school (closed due to Covid 19) we haven’t had much of it this year (no no) I can take him to school and that is kind of also a bit of extra time that we get in the morning and that is a huge advantage I would say that definitely a draw because any kind of parent teacher thing, anytime when parents can go into the school for any activity I’m right there yeah, it just happens to be the next building

So, when you looked for this particular kindergarten did you just look at this one or did you look at some other ones as well to sort of see what they were like

III …..don’t think I went to any others, no, just because you knew this one and you liked it?

I trying to think, yeah ehhm yeah I have been to a few open days since, ok why? there are always some kind of activities to do (laughing)

Ok so anything in particular you are looking for. When you go to other nurseries or other kindergarten, do you look for something specific.

I think just things like for example if there has been a Christmas fair yeah, or that kind of thing ok so just to see what activity is on there not specifically to see if they are any better or offer anything different yeah, I haven’t really found anything that is more of a draw away I would say ok

So, when you look at the values that the kindergarten provides for your child, what is it you are sort of specifically looking for? What do you want your child to learn?

I think eeehhhmm when I think about kindergarten for me it’s about eehhmmm just building a foundation of enjoying learning and I don’t really mind what they learn at this age and I suppose it’s more about that love for learning and love for one another , the kindergarten he goes to is extremely clear on what their values are ok they have their values kind of all over the place (waves arm to show big expanse) plus the curriculum they use also has some kind of core values and they tell you each week , this week we are learning about resilience, or this week we are learning about…..things I would not necessarily think that 4 year olds would pick up on but they don’t dumb it down for them yeah, I think I like that and eh I think that, just feeling that they are in a safe environment where they can explore, so they have quite a lot of free play when they first arrive, usually for at least 20 minutes yeah, where they can get something themselves and play with it, play with other kids play with teachers eeehhhmmm and there is an outdoor playground as well and a little garden and that is not a given in HK

No, I have worked a lot in HK and have visited a list of nurseries so yeah outdoor space is premium really isn’t it.

6:50 min Yeah and there is a lot of kindergartens they call themselves like wilderness or forest school and they are not at all no, they don’t even have outdoor space , it’s like every other week for two hours we go to a park or something like that yeah, and so I like that this one isn’t too over the top about promoting that stuff, but it still does have a little garden and they go on hunts like looking for butterflies and …nice… and stuff like that so it’s quite sweet

You mention forest school? Do you take your son to forest school at all? No, because I know there is a HK forest school, so I wondered if you took your son.

No, it’s pretty far away I think, no I would be pretty open it if there was an option to go nearby.

Yes because again, I visited the Hong Kong FS, it would be very good if you ever got the opportunity to visit because it is really nice (longer chat) yes

When you filled in the Questionnaire you talked about curiosity for your child, nods, and hums in agreement, why is that important to you?

EEEhhhmm long pause, I suppose it is because……eeehhhmmm….. I don’t know why is it important to me? Laughing, I suppose one thing I have definitely noticed about my son is that…he… his brain thinks in a different way to mine laughing, so we will be on an escalator and he will say:’ how does an escalator work?’ and I think, I have no idea, I have never thought about it I don’t even care laughing yeah and then…it just feels like a lot of learning building blocks attach on to that. We came home we watched a YouTube video about how escalators work nice, and then could have a conversation about that. So I think the school…eehhm they always say… as they do each unit, I think it’s about 6 to 8 weeks per unit, and before the unit they will say, ok this unit is going to be about space or something, start having conversations about space with your kids, or if you have any books and then they say, let us know what your child is particularly interested in and we are going to build it into the teaching. So, I like that aspects of it and I like the aspect of inviting kids and parents to participate and hang off the things that they are interested in.

Did you know this before you send your son to that Kindergarten that they did that or maybe from your own …. No

So, it’s just an experience that you are having, and you think, this is quite nice that they include the child’s voice and interests.

Yeah, I guess I probably just got the sense that they would do something like that, yeah.

So, when your son started there did he have to do an assessment or not?.... pause, because some kindergartens you have to do an assessment before you can start.

No he actually, he was part of a playgroup that they ran oh ok, yeah so I think it was probably like a teacher assessed so I think it was part of….there wasn’t a specific interview, they took on board what the playgroup facilitator was observing.

Do they teach a lot of academic aspects there, reading writing maths stuff like that or..

They do, they do eehhh actually today eehhh we had a parent teacher conference today all right, they said he does need to focus more on academics, and I was like what (frowning) what do you mean academic, yeah they specifically were talking about yeah phonics, numbers and art, yeah that kind of thing

Do you think that is important that he learns academic skills at this age, or do you think there are other things that are more important?

I think there is other things more important, but at the same time I’m not worried about it because he is still, I can see that he knows all his letters, eehhhmm, I don’t think he is behind or anything, so maybe I would be more worried about it if I didn’t see that he really was growing in that area. Like he can write his name he can write my name, he can read when it says busstop on the road, that kind of thing, I’m probably not worried about it because I can see he is improving even though his teachers say he can do a little bit more.

Yeah I think there is more important things, like at the moment he is an only child, so having that opportunity the interact with other kids, obviously with Covid it’s all been online, but they really have done a good job online to and they have encouraged the kids to have just one or two kids over to do the zoom class together and I think that has been really valuable to maintain that and yeah I think and just being kind to each other and learning how to be thankful, they do a lot of that and they…eehhhmm what was I thinking of today oh yes even kind of learning early public speaking skills, so getting them in front of a class to explain something and just developing that confidence

Good that sounds quite good, do you feel you got that when you were younger or do you feel its maybe a cultural thing, learning all these skills and these values you have just mentioned?

Uuuhhh I think hmm I suspect when I was younger they didn’t have such an established curriculum.

Yeah, so did you go to school in HK then when you were younger because you say you travelled a lot.

Yeah yeah I did, here it was suppose I think 3-5 I think yeah…. Long pause, it’s sort of hard to tell what I learned laughing yeah you have sort of forgotten.

If you look at your son’s education now, do you think there is an academic …..do you think its competitive academically? Maybe not so much at this age but moving forward, do you think there is that competitiveness for jobs in later life so when you are younger you need to do as well as you can.

I get the feeling that that is the prevailing culture, for sure, you need to choose your right playgroup to get to your right kindergarten to get to your right primary school so you can go to Harvard or something and I think that is a really prevailing culture. I think the school that we choose is not as academically rigorous and so I think it doesn’t attract that kind of parent and so I haven’t found too many of the class parents to be, to have that I think people have chosen the school because of the values, more than the academic, and maybe people at primary school stage will choose a different one.

But yeah my well my child is actually adopted so I think I have a much more trauma informed mindset so I’m not super worried about academics as I can see there is so much more important things like feeling safe, feeling like the teachers understand, which the school are actually quite intentional about being trauma informed, which I think is quite unique

So yeah I haven’t chosen it for the academics.

That is nice to hear because some parents do choose specifically for the academic reasons rather than for other reasons, like you have mentioned lots of reasons that you want your child to have that love curiosity, kindness and resilience, so that is really nice to hear

If the school could add anything at all to your child’s learning or development is there anything you could think of that you would like to see different?

I think….backtrack a bit, so it is a Christian kindergarten, they are definitely strong in it (faith) they always pray they always say hello to father god at the beginning of the day, that kind of thing, they learn bible verses, they do bible stories, if one of the children is sick they always pray for that child in class. I really like that, I am a Christian, I would not say it’s the reason I choose the school, but I think probably all of the values base comes out of that.

One of the things I have been noticing a lot more is the prevailing gender roles, but I think it’s not to do with being a Christian school I think it’s just a HK thing I guess it’s just a lot of tiny things that add up, the girls are like, oh I love your dress it’s so pretty, which it’s not a terrible thing, but that is just one thing I’m noticing more and more and I honestly don’t know if there are any schools that are in terms of leading the way inclusive of all genders and not putting kids in boxes so much. And I was talking to a friend whose child goes to a local kindergarten and they had this activity where you have to put the clothes on the child and there is very specific, what is right and what is wrong and that’s a regular local kindergarten and I feel like ours wouldn’t quite do an activity quite like that, but maybe they would.

So that is kind of something I would think about but other than that there is a lot of diversity in teachers in terms of…well..still mostly female teachers but that’s maybe the age group of the children as well yes, there is some men, there is different ages , different nationalities That’s probably the one thing I have been thinking about

Is there anything else that you feel is important for your child, just in general life that maybe we haven’t talked about.

Hmmm I think definitely being in a diverse and multicultural environment is really important and there definitely are some kindergartens in HK that is like majority 80 % white kids, and I wouldn’t,…. I would be quite intentional in not putting my child in an environment where it’s just not diverse.

Why is that so important to you?

I think ,well partly because my child is Chinese but partly because being around…I think it’s something I really valued, I moved to England when I was around 9 and went to a school of all white kids, and I remember being quite surprised and I think it taught me a lot just being a little kid being around lots of kids of different cultures and families of different cultures, like in school a few weeks ago they celebrated divali and they had…any parents of different religions or cultures will come in and do a talk or they read a book. They always have world culture day and stuff like that, and I think that’s something that’s really valuable for me.

Thank you that has been really interesting for me, is there anything you want to ask me?

Then general chat

If I didn’t have a connection with this kindergarten then I would have chosen a local kindergarten but because I had a connection, and it is within our financial capacity then.. it’s kind of at the lower end of international schools, I suppose price is also a component in choosing it.

Appendix 9 e

Interview with Carole

Initial introductions….

Thank you yes thank you so much for Doing this for me too I'm really appreciating it.

no problem no anika put me in contact.

yeah that's really nice it's very difficult you know when you're not in Hong Kong to find people to take part in you know my research so did you get chance to read what it's all about or yes I have had a read through it yeah good have you got any questions before I ask you questions know it sounds very interesting so yes very interesting research project yeah yeah,

so far managed to do questionnaires with 70 teachers and about 25 parents and I've done 5 interviews and I'm very surprised at what comes out of that it wasn't what I was expecting so that's really quite good I won't tell you at this moment what I found out coz you then may change your answers to fit in with that

with it with this with this interview now is it purely as a parent coz yes I'm also a teacher I didn't know that yeah it's purely as a parent really, what I really want to find out is why what values parents have and how these impact on the choices you make for your child and the choices of nursery, kindergarten, you know what is it really that you're hoping for that the kindergarten will provide for your child in regards to values, because I've worked in Hong Kong a few times, quite a few times, because I work for the University of Hull and we teach in Hong Kong so I do visit a lot of nurseries at Hong Kong as part of that teaching because I teach early childhood studies and I found that a nursery's are very varied and different in Hong Kong compared to the ones in the UK,they certainly are yeah so that's really what should have got me on this journey of trying to find out what it is that parents want really

so, I understand you've got a 3 1/2 year old, have you got a boy or a girl.

two boys yes two boys one is school age, So what is the equivalent of K1 here in Hong Kong yeah and the other one who's nearly 12 months ,okay yeah I mean the ones(3 ½ year old) obviously in kindergarten at present yeah yeah okay so yeah cause he's got 3 1/2 you said on the questionnaire

he started kindergarten obviously in August yet prior to that he did go to a play group setting ,the play group at like 12 months and then you know again, do you know the system in Hong Kong it's not compulsory but realistically knowing he'd be going five days a week into a K1 classroom we wanted really to expose into a little bit more obviously classroom based learning as well and being left independently so obviously our helper took him originally before then he became old enough like at the age of two he was end old enough to be left obviously independently and that was twice a week so we started from twice a week to obviously full time but two different settings is what I'm trying to say so yeah the set where he is now is actually where I teach okay so obviously that's probably that's why I'm saying I'm also a teacher that's probably got something to do with the reason for the choice as well.

yeah make sense yeah So what is it if you weren't teaching there would you have still chosen that particular place for him to be honest with you I would say yes I mean where he was in play group it was it was a Reggio, it was basically Reggio style where he was there and that's the reason I chose that is because obviously it's literally it's true inquiry based learning and with honesty that whole Hong Kong as you know it says she is a huge city so well it's not a huge city is small compared to other parts of the world but it's obviously very you know built up and I really wanted him to be exposed to that natural environment bringing the nature inside as much as possible so that's the reason for choosing and where he went for play group and then obviously again with where we are yes I think to be honest even if I wasn't teaching there coz I've taught elsewhere I taught in different settings myself in Hong Kong and I just think inquiry based learning, don't get me wrong it's not for everybody and who knows he still only very young and we might find out in a couple of years’ time that it's not really what is suited to him but knowing how he operates he's a very inquisitive little boy and to sit down and do like a session of literacy, a session of numeracy, Bang Bang bang, it just wouldn't I know right now it wouldn't suit him. I mean he is 3 1/2 because what I mean obviously the situation is very different because actually he's only been in school for before Christmas had only been in school for 24 days the rest of it yeah it's actually delivered online yeah you know it's obviously that very different situation as well at the moment but I feel as a parent and obviously I'm saying this also the teacher working at the organisation I feel obviously we're trying to do the best we can, teachers trying to do the best we can at all see clear parent perspective I can see both sides because you know I'm literally I'm delivering to my own class so I know what it's like and I understand also from the parent perspective yes we're very fortunate in the majority to have helpers but realistically I don't feel it's our helpers role to be delivering their and supporting I feel it should be my role as a parent but obviously at the circumstances but again.

I think from that perspective I mean Fortunately again, as a parent we receive every week we get a rundown of schedule so sometimes it's small group sometimes it's whole classrooms we also get like a skilled , that’s what we call it, skills builders and obviously there's just there's additional focus is that the children can obviously participate in if they want to but there's only really there's only been one specific skill, cause we based it on the , it's been based rather on the attitudes to learning so approaches that the approaches to learning that's why what the skills builders are based around and there's always one that's highlighted so if parents obviously are struggling to find time and myself being one of them, I know that actually out of the five focuses that the teachers are sharing with us there's only one specific one that I say is compulsory but obviously they would like us to do it to show obviously they're Doing some additional things other than live zoom because obviously how your child is online compared to how they are when they're working with you can be very different as well

yeah yeah so that that sounds like for 3 1/2 year old is quite a lot to do then.

is it quite academic focussed then or is it is it more play-based focused?

although it's play-based as regards to because of the switch, it's because basically the school itself is IB so it's an International Baccalaureate school so obviously it's all inquiry based learning and it is very play-based that we are our schedule that they have at school it's obviously class time and during that class time there's obviously arrival play ,their circle time then they have obviously like a small group type but the children can select obviously whether they'd like to go, some might be with the teachers so might be with their EA then they have an hour of open playtime and the open playtime is where the children get to obviously explore the whole floor so they can go across four classrooms and it's quite open plan so they get to obviously explore all of the different areas in every classroom is set up so that the construction area there's a sensory area all of that and then obviously they also get access to outside to the playground, and then obviously they come back in and then obviously it's quiet reading time it's again a second circle storey time before dismissal time so it's truly a play-based learning which is what again from a parent perspective seeing very different settings in Hong Kong that's what I think children of this age even when they get to primary is what lower primary should still be you know play-based to an extent yeah and so yes it's certainly one of the reasons I mean what have I had I not been if I wasn't a teacher myself if I wasn't teaching where I am where he was before also Fairchild, I would have I would have happily kept him I would have happily kept him there I would say the advantage from the parent of him being where he is now actually it's a through school organisation so the year that he started so 2020 yeah it actually has become through school organisation before it was like you have to obviously have a play visit to be accepted into kindergarten yeah and then there was also more other interview procedure when you like the next year when he moved into K2 if it was the old system he would have been interviewed for his primary school where is now its three school organisations so obviously he went for his play session last year, I obviously accompanied him and yes those boxes were ticked and now he doesn't have to have any form of additional interview which again as a parent I wouldn't want to put my child through that because it's not in realistically it's not an interview but as much as the organisation is big obviously every school is quite different to the expectations I'd heard both obviously as a professional but also as a parent I'd heard could be quite different depending on the primary school you applied for and I just think no child should be able to do that

no, I agree I agree, and I think it's a very Hong Kong style attitude to have interviews for children I don't think I don't know any other country in the world maybe China but I don't know any other country in the world where they do this now

and I must admit and again from obviously I'm speaking now from a teaching perspective to school I worked in before was also IB (International baccalaureate) but it was IB from more of a it had the title of being IB but because of the owners and because of their the management it was still quite didactic so it was that was one of the reasons obviously yes I had great experience there that's one of the reasons I moved but again like that the Interview, they were proper interviews there we were interviewing children of 18 months old where is from a parent perspective yet you know the children came in and it's literally it was true that yes there were three people observing you they were observing me as the parent with my interaction to my son but they were obviously also observing his capabilities of you know letting go of mummy and going off and playing exploring it was realistically and observationally session it wasn't that they were going to be tested on whether they knew the alphabet or whether they could be there count up to 20 which again additional schools as I'm sure you see in Hong Kong that would yeah yeah yeah I just feel yes very much you know from an early years and perspective realistically I just want him to be able to play I wanted you to play I want him to have that social interaction which unfortunately obviously he's missed that they've missed out on a lot this year yeah because the socially interact online is very different to in person so I still feel you know from a parent perspective as well as a professional perspective yes there's some of those skills he still lacking but everybody is in the same position

yes it's a very difficult time well not just for young children but for everyone really it is not easy to find that time to interact with each other.

If you could think of any specific values that you find really important I can hear already you say you find it important to be socially interactive, and for children to play, on your questionnaire you mention (I'm looking that way cause something at the screen) you mentioned love but you also said there was other things that you would find important as a value what do you think you're really hoping for for your children literally for them to have a passion a passion for going to school or passion for learning a passion for being sociable interactive and really engaging with others that to me is of vital importance.

I am and I think again you know from a Hong Kong perspective what you see on the outside but then what happens on the inside can be very different so, I just feel just as a parent the school it gives a really good vibe when you walk into it it's warm it's welcoming and you know again you think these children are young you know when you're leaving your child you know in in the hands of three other people that they don't know then you know I mean when he started he wasn't even three and I think you know to be able to do that five days a week you've got to you've got to know you've got to trust you got to have and I think you know obviously that connexion with the family the parents I think is a vital importance as Well and I think that's what's really good that's a good there's a good community there's a good feel okay so I think you know that's something that you really have to value as apparent as well is know that yes you know I'm willing to give but obviously most importantly there will get back to you

yeah and there's some parents who talk about the academic side for their children they already say at a very young age we want them in this specific school or this specific nursery because academically that will support them to eventually got to university how do you feel about that.

I am I don't feel realistically at this stage like obviously you can judge whether your child is you know quite switched on whether they're not and I'm not being biased when I say this; yes he is quite switched on little boy but again I really he's what halfway through K1, now it doesn't bother me by the end of K1 if he's got recognition of numbers one to 10 you know yes I know he can already count up to 10 but whether he can whether he's got recognition whether he can order them whether he's got all of those skills of being able to like some children obviously I know they can read by the time they move into grade that I teach but I'm just like no that's not important to me I just feel from an early years perspective it’s that social interaction that level of communication I wouldn't much much much rather know that my children can socially interact and engage with adults with children than you know literally socially just socially isolate themselves because they're very academic I just think you know I'm not saying there aren't values in that of course there are but I think at the same time that's level of social interaction is far more important

yeah do you think there's a difference coz your child goes to an IB school rather than a local school wear those values might be different?

yes definitely yeah definitely I mean and again I think that again I'm looking at it from 2 perspectives now obviously but speaking I know specifically is a parent I think again it's a lot about you know Hong Kong itself it's the title of the school is the organisation are they well is it this is it that's what a lot of the additional places are down too and I think you know academic yes of course it's of vital importance and culturally obviously culturally it's more important that their children are going to come out with straight A's then you know how to socially interact with other people I know that is you know strong belief but then also now I think there's a lot of parents who has had the opportunity like local parents I'm talking about now have had the opportunity themselves they've gone to University or maybe they went to boarding school at the age of 16 or something so they really also saw the difference themselves between even though they were sent to a highfalutin boarding school in a foreign country it was still very different it wasn't as didactic as what they are used to here, so I think from that perspective as well it's got to be warm passionately I mean obviously the school system is very different to when I was at school yes I did have to sit down and do and yes the reward at the end was to go off and play but I think realistically that is what is important it's really the children you know they can think they could be open minded that's what I want him to be able to think for himself I don't want him to always have to rely on you know somebody telling him what to do

yeah okay good just a quick question were you brought up in Hong Kong yourself I'm guessing not, I’m guessing what no saying Australia or New Zealand am I right , no I’m not okay I recently from Chester don't know why I thought it was an accent there people think that since I've moved here my accent apparently has changed do you think that's had an influence though being brought up in the UK then an obviously having different values from you know how you've been brought up why you've been to school do you think that will have an impact I do to be honest to an extent I do think so mean as much is obviously like the education system it was still the national curriculum it's just it's changed so vastly already since I was at you know in reception or even nursery and I just think the value of play now when you look at that you know the value of play I think generally from a true you know if it's if people are truly passionate about early years from a professional perspective now is an organisation that's what they value they value play yeah

whereas I think if they're not true believers in like early childhood education then obviously yes their selling points are talking Hong Kong now they sell that their very play-based in enquiry based but actually you know that when you see it you know you go on a school tour and you see a class of 4 year olds or even three year old sitting down Doing worksheets and you think that that's obviously it's not truly what they value no and I've been in Hong Kong I visited schools and in one particular one I had two children were aged 4 do a 20 minute presentation they have learned off by heart to tell me about their school and I thought I've never seen anything like this you know they were there excellent at it, but I thought this is not how a four year old should be, they we're very proud of course that they've managed to memorise a 20 minute speech and as an educator I didn't feel it was right, I thought they shouldn’t be Doing that, so yeah there is a vast difference in a lot of the places I've visited in Hong Kong some absolutely lovely and some I thought Oh my word I would not send my children in here

and I think that's it you really you really do get to feel cause I'll see again from a professional perspective we get to see and visit other schools then yeah you know and I think you know it's always good to see like you say it can be very eye opening sometimes but I just think you know when you walk into when you walk into the setting where he is it really is it's warm is welcoming you walk into the classroom and you don't see you know you don't see 10 tables which are going to accommodate two children each year literally maybe seating tables and the rest of it is counter top floor toys space you know every classroom is set up with different areas and they are all literally enabling play the only time sitting at a table is obviously for their snack time or yes if they're Doing a piece of creativity like they want to do some glueing and sticking you know they might be sitting at the table together or you know standing at the table but table yet you don't see many tables and I think you know when you walk into a setting and see those mounds of tables you're like no not for children of the age of three

yeah so will your other son go to the same place then.

once he's old enough you think yeah I mean I'm certainly hoping so again even like see where Moses is now yes but also from a you know from a nursery perspective or play group perspective we've already looked at when things settle down here and George will also go to where Moses did again for that very same feeling you know it's warm welcoming and just that whole you know social interaction

yeah good yeah it's it sounds like a very nice place you know the way you describe it so that's good. If they could add anything you know in in respect of values of what you feel is important for your children is there anything that you think the nursery could add you know to teach them or to you know value to give them

I think and again I suppose I'm thinking possibly not just as a parent now but also from research from a course that I've just finished professionally as well I think you know we're very were very internationally minded as it as and as a school it's a very internationally minded as an organisation it very internationally minded but I also think like culturally like realistically my son is a third culture kid yeah so you know obviously I think moving forward it would be lovely to think that actually there's a little bit more of a an international mindedness perspective and that its valued but I think to really highlight that a little bit more coz you can walk into like my son's class there are 20 four children and I don't know for definite because of this I'm not in that classroom myself but as regards to when you look at children there must be at least 12 different nationalities yeah so I think you know yes don't get me wrong they do you know if if a parent was to come in and stay to you know like obviously we want to look at we celebrate Diwali of course that the teacher would be great you know as normally under normal circumstances the teacher would be you know well of course come in and if you'd like to lead something or whatever that would be great and I think you know again my son he's mixed coz he's daddy's African and I'm western so yeah again he is a child of different cultures as well so I think to be able to make value that and from the mother tongue perspective as well obviously yes it's an it's an English medium school but I think also yes they but they have a Mandarin so they are you have Mandarin every week but I think to really give children the opportunity to communicate more in their mother tongue as well I think you know like trying cluster you know a group of you know specific nationality together whenever we would really value that even more

yeah do you bring up your children in dual language or you know as English and other…no like that coz daddies language is pretty much English as well so it's like he only speaks at present he really speaks English but I just think you know just from just for cultural perspective as well I sort of you know not necessarily just the language but also like to value which they do but I think there's still as we move forward I think there's still real for that progress yes and that would give more… and that would even just like the library in things I mean the library it's you know see they haven't really been able to access it he has he's never been able to bring a book home this year because again just because of the situation but I think you know like they can learn so much from you know different cultures different nationalities and having that you know to be to be in a classroom like that I mean I'm not saying it's not like that in the UK obviously lots of cities you go into schools and yes there's loads of nationality but I also think if it was more like where I was brought up and it's quite rural there now rather because it's North Wales where my parents are, like he would really be probably one of those children he did stand out because he's a mixed race yeah yeah I think you look at it from that perspective as well cause I mean again when I went to school I mean there weren't any children to my knowledge that were, well we were all white (yes same for me) we were either English or Welsh you know that was it 21st century so very much change then I know of even back in the UK, like I said it just depends on where you're brought up where you're raised as to what the actual population consists off but I do think you know for the 21st century and moving forward in life it's like yeah I mean it's Hong Kong but at the same time it's multicultural

I said the whole world is more multicultural now because of a movement that we cannot, well normally can have with flights so we can't at the moment but yeah but it yeah and we should celebrate that we should learn from each other.

so I think I think you know it's something that I know for obviously from a professional perspective it's something that we're working towards but I think now from a parent perspective as well definitely I think you know yes it's valued but I think it could be valued yeah and again it might be that some parents are quite happy to come forward and say I want to celebrate a specific day I don't know how to sit Patricks day or divali or whatever it is but there's obviously lots of parents who wouldn't feel comfortable Doing that so again they might get missed out because you know they just aren't forward enough to come and talk about it yeah exactly yeah

So what I sort of gather from all this is that really for you it's the social sites very important for your children the sort of international gaining more understanding of the wider world is so would you say for you those things are more important than the academic site and looking at the future academically yes realistically it is yeah I mean obviously it's a vital importance is of course you want your children to be academic and not to really be behind at school and struggle but I just think when you look at this level now obviously it's not compulsory children don't have to actually physically attend school at this age but I feel you know it would be very strange if a child didn't attend a kindergarten or a play group of me in Hong Kong they would be one of few I just think that's realistically what they need they need that social interaction they need that they need that warm loving environment which I know Moses has but I just think that is really what I value I'm you know it doesn't matter where he is academically at present obviously yes there's always a level that children should be you know they should be you know meeting these goals by this age we all know that but I think at this at this very age and certainly the current situation social interaction is really important yeah and it's what I value

good sounds very good yeah I don't really have any other questions really because you answered them straight away without me having to ask them.

I apologise if I sort of answered those obviously educators hat on actually that's really interesting for me to hear both sides and I think whatever witnessed in Hong Kong is a lot of academic approaches but what actually has to come out of all the research I've done so far is that actually parents aren't really interested in the academic site which really surprised me I thought that that would be the outcome, teachers were very much talking about respect and more the confucian sort of aspects of Hong Kong but the parents all the interviews and the questionnaires have all sort of said they want the social side for their children to creative sides the warmth the love the exploring so to me,

that's really interesting can I ask have most of the parents you have interviewed you might be asking have they been expats or have they been local as well spin a mixture.

it's a mixture so actually that's been really good coz I think if they were all expats than that would indicate you know it comes from obviously there are not bringing an you know so it's been a mixture and it was very surprising to see that the ones who were originally from Hong Kong and from an Asian background said the same they said we just want their children to socially be you know very good and have those Connexions ,one of them said you can always learn for the rest of your life you don't need it at this age but what you do need is some good values and to have strong friend ships and you know and be socially in a good place so then once you're socially in a good place you can achieve anything in life and I think that's I mean again I'm speaking now from a professional perspective like when we when we have our play visits I mean this year they literally just had to submit a video of their child engaging online coz they're not allowed to come into school to play visits but that's very much you know the whole purpose of our play visits is really to get a feel for the parents expectations of the school as well as obviously the child and I think that that you do get a lot of you know parents from Asian backgrounds who would just like I hated school I hated the didactic style I really didn't develop my social skills until I was like sent off to boarding school at 16 and then went on to University I just got my child to be in a social interactive play-based setting so I think yeah you do really it's interesting the diversity you know you get others who could get others who come in and they're like oh you know straight away it's like oh so and so you know do go tell the teacher that you can count up to 20 and better than it's like I'm not interested in anything you know that child will probably end up being a know because they don't have any form of social interaction so we haven't you know we have a waiting list so actually realistically it wouldn't necessarily be we don't feel that your child would suit our setting yeah you know it's nearly the pressure obviously you know yourself, the pressure is very high here in Hong Kong yeah see there's from a teaching perspective as well as obviously the parents being able to get their child into it like an international setting but I think yeah it's really when you interview people or when you have a chat with them that you really get the truth philosophy what they want what they understand can be quite different

yeah yeah I had two parents wanted filled in the questionnaire but the other one did the interview and they didn't match at all so the one parent had filled in the questionnaire said they wanted very much academic and the one I spoke to didn't want that at all so if I do it's quite interesting to have a you know that is such a picked up in in what you actually want for your child so yeah that was interesting yeah well thank you very much I don't have any other questions I don't know if there's anything you want to ask me

No thank you very much and I look forward to hearing more about your research yeah well.

I'm happy once I've finished it which could be another I don't know six months to a year cause it's a PhD and it takes forever but I'm happy to send you it once you know once it's done if you want yeah well like I give my

I based my Masters on like the relevance of inquiry based learning in the early years so I think from it's very interested in like the feedback and seems like obviously the research that comes out from the people that you interviewed especially would be interesting to hear more. thank you I’m happy to send it to you once I have finished it.

well best of luck with everything and if I can't give any more help at all obviously let me know okay that's lovely Rebecca thank you very much very much yeah

Appendix 9 f

Information given by Christine, she felt uncomfortable being interviewed but was happy to answer a few questions on paper.

1. How old is your child?

**2.2 years**

1. Does your child attend a kindergarten/early years setting?

**Yes**

1. How did you choose the kindergarten your child attends? (did you visit several kindergartens? Or what was it specifically that attracted you to the one you choose)

**Visited a few but chose the one based on the environment it is located in (It is literally located in a park, so it is bright and has lots of natural light/fresh air) and also based on my son’s response with the venue.**

1. Did your child have to take part in an assessment? And if so, what did they have to do to be assessed?

**Yes. He had to just play around with some Montessori toys and the assessor observed his interactions/responses.**

1. What values do you want the kindergarten to teach your child?

**Humanitarian values**

1. Which values are important to you, and do you feel these are linked to maintaining your cultural values? please explain as much as you can.

**Humanitarian values and yes it is linked to maintaining our cultural values which we have learnt from our childhood especially through our religion where we were exposed to the ideology of philosophies of life, moral values, etc. from a very young age. Exposing our kid to humanitarian values will be much appreciated in our culture too.**

1. Are academic achievement aspects important to you? Can you explain your answer please?

**Yes, he needs to achieve fair academically but really not expecting much. We understand each kid is different.**

1. Which Academic aspects do you want your child to gain?

**Science and Maths oriented**

1. Do you feel there is a competitiveness in academic standards and maybe an impact on job prospects for the future of your child?

**Yes, strongly feel that.**

1. How far do you travel to the kindergarten? Do you pay privately, or do you make use of the voucher scheme of the government?

**About 3kms and yes, applied to the government subsidies.**

1. What impact do you think choosing the right kindergarten for your child will have on their future regarding learning new skills, values, academic achievement?

**I don’t think this affects much as we believe free learning up to age 6 at least. But enrolling the child in any kindergarten would give them some new exposure outside home/playground.**

1. Is there anything else you want to add which you feel is important for me to understand as a reason for you choosing a kindergarten for your child?

**Recommendation from other parents.**

Appendix 9 g

Transcript of interview with Joanne

Introductions and general chat then questions

I understand you have a one child (from the questionnaire); do you have a boy or a girl?

Well, we have three, our son is 9 and we have twin girls who are in kindergarten, they are 5 and a half.

Ok, so how did you choose that kindergarten? Because on your questionnaire you said they were in a kindergarten nearby, how did you make that choice (Mum going HmmHmmm in agreement)

Uuuh, well when we were moving to HK we uuuh were trying to figure out where we would live and where our kids would go to school, we wanted to try and live somewhere, we wanted to not be very far from my work (Yeah), I didn’t want to commute a long time and we didn’t want the kids to have to commute for a long time as well. So, we were sort of trying to manage and we were looking for like a good school that in theory could take all of our children (hmmm in agreement) that we could afford uuuuh and that kind of meant that our geographical need and comported with our broader family values yeah ok and then that actually ended up being a pretty small number of schools.

So, when you talk about your broader family values what do you mean by that.

Uuuuh well I hink there is two, my partner is a woman (ok) so we are a two mum family and we really wanted to make sure that we were in a school where our kids would feel good about who they are and who their family is (ok) and we also uuuuh have in general like I guess a more what I call a progressive educational philosophy, we are hoping for like more, like some hands on learning and less rote memorisation and fewer worksheets and more creative play and that kind of stuff

Ok so have you found that? do you think the kindergarten the girls go to is providing that?

I do, yeah

Is it a Montessori or is it a specific kindergarten?

It’s an independent school, it’s a private school, an international school I guess it’s called (yeah)

Uuuuhhm and…it doesn’t…they have an American curriculum, which wasn’t necessarily a priority for us, but they have it. English is the language structure; they do a lot of like hands on and art and there is not a lot of pressure on the kids to read although they are certainly learning to read and that kind of thing (yes)

It’s also a school that is attached…I don’t know if you are familiar with HK but it’s the Harper school (yes yes I’m familiar with that) so they also have an inclusion model (yeah ok), when it comes to academic ability and that is really…I mean our kids as of now don’t need services of any kind (yeah) and we don’t anticipate that they will but we really like that model

yeah ok that sounds good, if you look at your values do you feel they line up with the values of the school, wat sort of values would you like the school to teach your children?

20 second pause-thinking time

I think they line up pretty well, eeeehhh, you know to be respectful and to be kind to one another, especially at the kindergarten level, and to ..you know..share well, to celebrate your own achievements and those of other people…pause for 10 sec….yeah…

Do you think that is specific to the one you have chosen? or do you think that is something that gets sort of delivered or taught or however you want to say it in all kindergartens or was that something that you know , when you looked at where to go that jumped out at you?

Well, I certainly think that all kindergartens or most kindergartens say that (yeah, laughing) and then I think that some kindergarten do things that eeeuuuh don’t support that. Like they might for example like rank students (yeah) by academic performance which I don’t think supports a collaborative or kind… I don’t think that helps students feelgood about who they are, not at 5 anyway….uuuuhm and I guess our other value is sort of class based, because there is so much wealth in HK especially in the international schools (yeah) and we didn’t particularly want our kids to be in an environment where everyone was like super rich, you know, I mean (laughing) (yeah) like , like everybody is wealthy right, it’s an international school but also like teachers kids go for free, so there’s like a ..more like a slightly more mixed income scenario and I think that thats.. I mean one thing I do like about all the schools in Hong Kong is the uniforms, everyone wears a school uniform and I think that’s a measure of equality, or like, you know (so you have a level where everyone at least looks the same, in the sense of wearing the same uniform)

So, do you think is the academic side is more important to you or are there other things that you find more important?

Oooh it’s not so important in kindergarten (ok) for us, uuhh,you know we have a lot of confidence that our kids will learn to read and they will be curious about the things that they are curious about, uuhm and they will learn to count and all that kind of thing, you the bars…like I just, I don’t know we are not that worried about it

Ok so you haven’t chosen a kindergarten to specifically thinking this will help them in the future with their academic career. No?

No, I guess we chose a school that we didn’t think would hinder that (yeah) because the most important thing for us in their academic career is especially at this age is that they like school (yeah ok) we want them to like school and learning so…

So, when they arrived did, they have to do a test to get in or… I know that some HK kindergartens ask children to do some sort of assessment before they start.

8.37 min Nooo I mean we had to do like, they had to get teacher references and submit their transcripts, such as they were, you know (laughing)…. But no because we didn’t do a visit so no they didn’t do a ..

Did you just look online then because you say you didn’t do a visit? So how did you, I’m interested how you choose that particular school?

No, I visited alright, ok, but we didn’t bring the family. ah ok, so did you just visit that one or did you visit several kindergartens or nurseries?

I definitely visited at least two (pausing to think), partly because we were also looking for a school or school system where our son could attend as well so we wanted a kindergarten that was attached, oh and when we got here, this is our second year, we came last year, the girls were going into what in the states we would call PreK or I guess here it is K2(yeah) so we wanted something that would meet their needs and ideally where our son could go to elementary as well so we were navigating one system instead of two (yeah) and there aren’t a ton of those, we also wanted a secular school, so I looked at harbour and I looked at the international Montessori (yeah) down on the Southside which also seemed like it would be fine, I think that’s a lovely school as well

So, you compared a few really to find one that fitted in with your values? Hmmmm in recognition

Did the children, this might be a strange question, but did you ask the children what they wanted or was it a choice as a parent you made for them? We choose yeah, which is normally what happens, I’m just interested to see whether parents have discussed it with the children or not. So, you chose, what did you,…. How do I word this… when you are thinking of your children’s future what are you hoping they are getting from this early start in life? What are you hoping by choosing the right place for them> You may never have thought of this, is there something that you were hoping that, how it would set them up for life?

11.40 Uuuuhhhh (long pause- thinking time) well I think, well maybe we are unusual in this way, I’m not sure, I think that , well in general I have in te past believed that you know some children are orchids and some children are dandelions , I think I have dandelions for the most part, which is to say I think they could have been happy and they could have thrived more or less in a handful of different kinds of institutions, whether or not my partner and I would have thrived as parents in those institutions is another question (laughing) so I hope that they have fun memories of their teachers, hope that they make friends, that they can carry with them( long term friendships as a value), I hope that they go excited into first grade

Ok and so if you think about skills that they might learn or different values that they might learn, what sort of thing are you hoping for, that they might learn from this time in their life pause from parent…..that might take them through to their future

I hope, I think a big part of kindergarten is to learn to follow instructions and participate in a group and like be a friend and have a friend and include other kids, I think it’s mostly social I think and its mostly groundwork that will sort of project out, I feel that whatever they do or don’t get academically they will get eventually so for you the social side is more important and emotional, social and emotional oh ok, because on the questionnaire you filled in you also talked about honesty, hmmm (in agreement), so what do you mean by honesty?

Well I don’t think I would have put it if I hadn’t seen it on the questionnaire, I think somebody had put it there and suddenly I though Oh yeah, and some of that is just because little kids are liars, they go through that developmental stage like that is what they are working on (yeah) like what’s the truth and what can I get away with, thing like that and I do want …..and…..that is a very important value in my family, you tell me the truth even when its hard (yeah ok) and so I want the school to reinforce that (yeah) which I assume that they do that and that they don’t reward the children for lying (yes you would assume that)

If there was anything that you could add to what you want the school to teach your children and that maybe they don’t teach your children at the moment, is there anything you can think of? Long pause…..I know I’m asking questions you have probably never thought of before.

No, I don’t think that they, and this is important I don’t know what you would call this and if it is a values or how you would construct it in a language of values.

I don’t think they are as literate in like non-traditional family structures as ideally they would be or as perhaps the school that we would have sent our children to in Brooklyn New York would have been, so I wish that there was a more…. Like holistic or thoughtful affirmation of different kinds of families, different kinds of lifestyles different…you know like….(Pause) open attitude maybe? towards different lifestyles? It’s not even ..open, they have been very kind and we have been like gone and said that that was important to us, it think it’s not part of their…… like in their holiday concert they are going to sing a Māori song and a Cantonese song and a Honeka song and they do all this stuff, but they don’t feel like they have the sort of familiarity with …….like family structure… do you think that might be a cultural thing, yeah, because for myself working in HK I Have come across a lot of students who are Gay and they have told me that that is still frowned upon, they are accepted but it is frowned upon whereas we look in the UK or America that is different I think, far more accepting and far more everyone is equal and everyone is the same and it doesn’t matter if you love a man or a woman. So personally, what I have seen it is a bit of a cultural thing where they still think it doesn’t quite fit into their way of thinking, but I don’t know if that is your experience.

I mean they have been extremely warm, they haven’t.. we have never gotten a sense that like… it just feels like me and our PTA , which I’m not a part of, but the parent group recently sponsored a workshop like about pronouns and gender and how do we get with the times and that was like…. And was glad that they did that uuuhhm but it’s not… it does feel like its 10 or15 years behind of where the US is.

Do you think that will have an impact on your children on how they are treated or how they are viewed or how they view themselves No, no so it's not having that impact, no I don’t think so?

So, if you think about the future of your children is there anything you think that is specifically important for them, a value for them to have or an aspect of academic learning.

I want them to be curious and confident. I want them to know how to learn, I want them to understand how to solve problems and believe that they have the power to solve problems or answer questions yeah and I want them to be academically generous and intellectually generous.

18.30 min After that general chat

Appendix 10 Further collated findings from interviews.

