The enactment of school literacy policy by early childhood teachers in an Australian context: Contested policies and practices

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Doctor of Philosophy of
The University of Western Australia

Graduate School of Education

2017
Thesis Declaration

THESIS DECLARATION

I, Tamara Anne Bromley, certify that:

This thesis has been substantially accomplished during enrolment in the degree.

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on early childhood education and care (ECEC) teachers. The primary focus of the study was on policy processes in schools and was located in selected public schools in the State of Western Australia (WA).

The study was conducted during a time when both literacy and ECEC in Australia had become areas of intense focus, consistent with global trends. The Australian Federal Government was implementing policy that represented a national educational reform agenda to enhance Australia’s international competitiveness in the global knowledge economy. Improved educational outcomes were deemed to be required across the nation and improvements in literacy and ECEC were both identified in policy as foundational to this endeavour. There were additional pressures in WA as the State’s literacy results in national testing regimes were lower than desirable. State educational policy subsequently targeted literacy, with improvements intended to begin in the ECEC years in schools.

The study adopted complementary theoretical paradigms of interpretivism and critical theory, at different points in the investigation. The interpretivist paradigm framed the initial data analysis to reveal individual participant perspectives on literacy policy enactment. Critical theory framed the meta-analysis to expose issues of power embedded in policy processes across a variety of sites from global to local levels. The conceptual basis for the study was a ‘policy trajectory’ framework which structured the research questions. Data was collected using both documents and semi-structured interviews at macro (national: Australia), meso (State: WA) and micro (local: school) levels of the policy trajectory. At the micro level, three case study schools were selected. Two contexts of policy processes were examined at the national and State levels, namely policy influences and policy text production. In schools, the contexts of
policy practices (enactment) and policy outcomes were also investigated. Details of the setting of each school, collected using a typology of contextual dimensions, contributed to data analysis which encompassed thematic and critical discourse analysis. Following meta-analysis along the policy trajectory from macro to micro levels, ten propositions were developed in theorising the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on ECEC teachers.

The study found that literacy policy processes in Australia were predominantly being influenced by a pervasive neoliberal ideology. However, school literacy policy enactment played out in diverse ways in the unique setting of each case study school, and was at times ‘messy’ in individual schools. Notwithstanding variable school responses, the policy elite’s neoliberal emphasis on enhancing Australia’s international positioning ultimately overrode more socially democratic orientations of local school communities. This was reinforced through policy mechanisms such as accountability regimes and financial policy levers, as well as an underlying co-operative federalism discourse, which accorded the policy elite with power to ultimately control school literacy policy enactment. Literacy teaching and learning in the ECEC years in schools was being steered ‘from a distance’ by Federal and State Governments in Australia.

Consequently, literacy teaching in the ECEC years of schools was becoming increasingly data-driven and the definition of literacy itself narrowed to what was assessed in national testing regimes. This was in tension with how literacy was defined in national curriculum documents and there is potential for children’s learning of the breadth of literacy skills required for the twenty-first century to be limited. Increasing pressures to explicitly teach literacy content deemed necessary for successful test results is marginalising play-based pedagogy in the ECEC years in schools in deference to more explicit teaching.
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To my parents who said “education can never be taken away from you”.
Conventions

The term ‘Federal’ when referring to levels of government:
Australia is considered a federation of states. The tiers of government in Australia are Federal, State and Local Governments. The terms ‘Australian Government’, ‘Federal Government’ and ‘Commonwealth Government’ are often used interchangeably to refer to the national level of government. This thesis will adopt the term ‘Federal’, with a capital ‘f’, when referring to the national level of government.

Department of Education Western Australia (DoE (WA))
During the evolution of literacy policy under consideration in this investigation, the education department of Western Australia underwent numerous name changes, being called at various times Department of Education and Training (DET) Western Australia (WA) or Department of Education (DoE) Western Australia (WA).

This thesis will adopt the name ‘Department of Education (DoE), Western Australia (WA)’ when referring to the education department of Western Australia in the main text, except in reference to authorship of specific policy documents.

Spelling conventions
This thesis has adopted ‘English (Australian)’ spelling conventions. For instance, the word ‘programme’ is spelt as such in the main text. ‘Program’ is used in relation to specific names eg On-Entry Assessment Program.

Use of capitalisation for the word ‘state’:
Capital ‘S’ is used for State when referring to Western Australia, a defined territory. Small ‘s’ is used for state for referring to apparatuses of government.

Use of capitalisation for the word ‘government’:
Capital ‘G’ is used for Government when it is used as a proper noun. When lower case, it refers to the generic or plural case (eg ‘governments’).
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<td>AEDC</td>
<td>Australian Early Developmental Census</td>
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<td>AEDI</td>
<td>Australian Early Developmental Index</td>
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<td>Critical discourse analysis</td>
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<td>COAG</td>
<td>Council of Australian Governments</td>
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<td>DEEWR</td>
<td>Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations</td>
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<td>DET</td>
<td>Department of Education and Training</td>
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<td>DG</td>
<td>Director General</td>
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<td>DoE</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
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<td>ECEC</td>
<td>Early childhood education and care</td>
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<td>EPPE</td>
<td>Effective Provision of Pre-School Education</td>
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<td>EYLF</td>
<td>The Early Years Learning Framework</td>
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<td>IPS</td>
<td>Independent Public School</td>
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<td>MCEETYA</td>
<td>Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAPLAN</td>
<td>The National Assessment Program-Literacy and Numeracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>PISA</td>
<td>Programme for International Student Assessment (OECD)</td>
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<td>RDHS</td>
<td>Rural District High School</td>
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<td>SPS</td>
<td>Suburban Primary School</td>
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<td>TPS</td>
<td>Town Primary School</td>
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Chapter One

Introduction

Aim and Context

The aim of this study was to investigate the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on early childhood education and care (ECEC) teachers in schools. The study was located in selected public schools in the State of Western Australia (WA).

At the time of this study, there was a growing global knowledge economy underpinned by the forces of globalisation and neoliberalism. Education had become positioned as central to providing a nation with the human capital necessary for participation in this global knowledge economy.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Australia was seen by the Federal Government as not performing at a satisfactory level in this international arena. For instance, international surveys and reports of Australia’s education system, managed predominantly by the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), were not favourable. There thus eventuated a concerted push through national educational policy to reform the Australian education system. The central aim of this reform agenda was to achieve improved educational outcomes to enhance the nation’s international competitiveness in the global knowledge economy, so placing education on the economic agenda in Australia.

Literacy education and ECEC each became foundational to this endeavour. Literacy was positioned as an essential part of the knowledge, skills and abilities required for Australian students to contribute to, and participate in, the global knowledge economy, and enhance Australia’s international standing. Quality ECEC was seen as foundational to children’s learning to produce the desired improved
outcomes, and enhance competitiveness. Accordingly, there were increasing pressures for change in each of these areas accompanied by a constant push for the demonstration of improved outcomes.

Additional pressures were being felt in the State of WA. Results in the national testing regime in literacy, being the National Assessment Program-Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), were showing that students in WA were not performing as well as their peers in other parts of Australia. Furthermore, an independent study found that students in the ECEC years of schools in WA performed more poorly than their peers in other States of Australia on a range of key literacy indicators (Louden, Rohl & Hopkins, 2008). State educational policy consequently targeted literacy, with improvements aimed to begin in the ECEC years of school.

This study was thus undertaken at a time of intense focus on literacy teaching in the ECEC years in schools in WA. There were myriad national and State policies coming into schools, all calling for change to achieve improvements. The decision to engage in a policy analysis at the school level was taken to explore whether the intent of the policy elite at national and State levels was being put into practice and enacted by those in schools expected to implement the policy.

Central Concepts

Two concepts central to this investigation were literacy and ECEC. These were found to be complex and contested concepts in both the public arena and the literature.

There were various definitions of literacy in the literature. Each definition, while differing to each other, was found to inform an understanding of literacy as a rich construct (McVee, Dunsmore & Gavelek, 2005). Researchers argue that
teaching literacy within this broad frame can provide students with the necessary skills and knowledge for life in the culturally diverse and increasingly technological world of the twenty-first century (Lapp, Moss & Rowsell, 2012; New London Group, 1996; Walsh, 2010, 2011; Yelland, 2011).

Research highlights the importance of paying attention to literacy learning in the early years to establish solid foundations for later literacy learning (Scull, Nolan & Raban, 2012; Wasik & Hindman, 2005). Researchers such as Hay and Fielding-Barnsley (2012), Massey (2013) and Pellegrini and Galda (1993) contend that a play-based pedagogy presented through a broad, holistic curriculum is beneficial for literacy learning during the ECEC years. However, the field of ECEC remains beset with controversy and contention, particularly in the areas of ECEC pedagogy and curriculum.

Curriculum, together with pedagogy and evaluation, are important because they “frame the core of teachers’ work” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 94). However, Luke (2003) asserts that policy affects many aspects of teachers’ work, and so the third central concept was that of educational policy.

Policy is defined for the context of this investigation as a value laden complex process that is always incomplete (Ball, 1994, 1997; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Educational policy is any text which aims to “frame, constitute and change educational practices” (Lingard & Ozga, 2007, p. 2). The term enactment is increasingly used in the literature to encapsulate policy processes that occur within and through global and local contexts (Ball, 1994; Heimans, 2012a, 2012b; Luke, 2003; Maguire, Ball & Braun, 2010).

A critical review of the research revealed that educational policy is being influenced by both globalisation and neoliberalism in nations around the world, and
this includes Australia. Research also highlights how neoliberal based educational policies, that are focused upon ‘high stakes’ test results, are impacting upon teachers’ work in both literacy education and ECEC.

**Theoretical Paradigm**

The study adopted dual complementary theoretical paradigms, namely interpretivism and critical theory. The adoption of dual complementary theoretical paradigms enabled the study to explore the individual’s perspectives on policy as well as expose issues of power.

The interpretivist paradigm (Christians, 2005; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; O’Donoghue, 2007; Punch, 2005; Silverman, 2010) provided the frame for initial data analysis to understand the meanings made of the literacy policy processes under investigation from the perspectives of policy actors to reveal multiple truths. Critical theory (Bonner, 2002; Crotty, 2009; Hammersley, 1997; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005; Scott & Morrison, 2006; Wodak, 2001) provided a lens by which to frame the meta-analysis to explore issues of power across the policy sites (Ball, 1994; Braun, Ball & Maguire, 2011) and reveal the prevailing truth (Bucci, 2002) of the meaning made of the literacy policy processes under investigation. Each theory was thus adopted at different points of the investigation in a complementary fashion to reveal the complex processes inherent in the literacy policy processes investigated.
Methodology

The methodology was framed by a policy trajectory approach (Ball, 1994; Vidovich, 2013). Policy was analysed as a process that extended between various levels, namely macro (national: Australia), meso (State: WA) and micro (local: school) levels. Four different contexts within levels of the policy trajectory were used to frame specific research questions. These are the context of policy influences, the context of policy text production, the context of policy practices (enactment) and the context of policy outcomes (Ball, 1994; Vidovich, 2013).

The following research questions used to guide the investigation were derived from the policy trajectory framework:

1. What are the key **influences** on literacy policy identified along the policy trajectory, at macro (national: Australia), meso (State: WA) and micro (local: school) levels?
2. What are the main characteristics of literacy **policy texts** at macro (national: Australia), meso (State: WA) and micro (local: school) levels and how are they produced?
3. How is school literacy policy being **enacted** by ECEC teachers in public schools in the State of WA?
4. What are the longer term **outcomes** of the enactment of school literacy policy?

Data collection occurred at the national (macro), State (meso) and school (micro) levels in Australia, with the primary focus being on literacy policy processes in selected public schools in the State of WA at the micro (local: school) level.
Global contexts were considered but empirical data was not collected at the international level.

Through a qualitative research design, semi-structured interviews (Borer & Fontana, 2012; Fontana & Frey, 2008; Scott & Morrison, 2006) were conducted with participants and documents were collected at all levels of the literacy policy trajectory investigated from macro (national: Australian), meso (State: WA) to micro (local: school) levels. At the micro (local: school) level of this trajectory, three schools were selected as case study sites for analysis. Details of the context of each school were collected using a typology of contextual dimensions, provided by Braun, Ball, Maguire and Hoskins (2011). Although it is recognised that the perspectives of students, parents and other stakeholders would also be insightful, this study was limited to that of school staff at the micro (local: school) level.

Thematic analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014) was used to extract initial themes from the data and reveal perspectives of participants as they engaged with the policy processes under investigation. Critical discourse analysis (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2003, 2013; Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui & O’Garro, 2005; Taylor, 2004) was employed to uncover the discourses at play and make visible the power relationships within and along the literacy policy trajectory investigated from macro (national: Australian), meso (State: WA) to micro (local: school) levels.

Analysis of policy processes investigated at the macro (national: Australian) and meso (State: WA) levels considered two contexts of the policy trajectory, these being policy influences and policy text production (Ball, 1994; Vidovich, 2013). This provided the broad milieu for analysis at the micro (local: school) level of the literacy policy trajectory investigated. Data collection and analysis through the three
case study schools at the micro (local: school) level considered four contexts of the policy trajectory: namely, policy influences, policy text production, policy practices (enactment) and policy outcomes (Ball, 1994; Vidovich, 2013). Details of each school’s setting, collected using a typology of contextual dimensions provided by Braun, Ball, Maguire and Hoskins (2011), were also included in analysis to explore the possible impact of the local setting on school literacy policy processes.

Meta-analysis was then conducted across the whole policy trajectory investigated from macro (national: Australian), meso (State: WA) to micro (local: school) levels. Themes were extracted and discussed in relation to the literature. Ten propositions were developed in theorising the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on ECEC teachers.

Positionality of the Researcher

The researcher is a practising and experienced ECEC teacher employed in the public education system of WA. The researcher is known in her local education district for her interest in literacy and ECEC. She has lead the development and implementation of school literacy policy in various schools in rural WA.

The researcher’s work informed her values and background knowledge as she approached the study. Leading up to this investigation, she observed many changes occurring in literacy education and ECEC and wondered about the source and reasons for these changes. Thus, she embarked upon this research study. Her current and past schools were not included as a case in this study.
Significance and Contribution

This study makes original contributions to the research in a number of ways, significant to the fields of literacy, ECEC and educational policy.

The study investigates the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a primary focus on ECEC teachers who are located in schools. In doing so, the study brings together, within an Australian context in the one investigation, the complex, and often contentious, fields of literacy education, ECEC and educational policy. Furthermore, the focus on the ECEC years is within school sites. There is research in the field of literacy, both internationally and in Australia, on how educational policy is affecting teachers’ work in literacy teaching. There is also emerging research in the field of ECEC on how educational policy is impacting upon ECEC teachers’ work. However, this study makes a significant contribution to research as there is minimal research that, like this one, explores and theorises how Australian educational policy is impacting upon teachers’ work in literacy teaching in those ECEC years that are within the school system.

This study is also timely in the Australian, and WA, educational policy landscape. Literacy education and ECEC is each a contemporary key educational policy focus area in Australia. At the time of the investigation, the public school system in WA was undergoing change, being impacted upon by national and global trends, and this included in the areas of literacy education and ECEC. There was extensive contention and debate about literacy education in the ECEC years of school, much of it stemming from the impact of national and State educational policy. This investigation makes a significant contribution to the research as it provides a ‘point in time’ reflection on literacy teaching in the ECEC years in
schools in WA, to provide ‘food for thought’ and bases for reflection, in this, and other, jurisdictions.

This study uses a policy trajectory approach (Ball 1994; Vidovich, 2013), thereby contextualising local curriculum policy processes in schools within broad global and national contexts of policies and research. This study thus straddles the global-local context. Furthermore, the study utilises both written policy texts as well as participant data from interviews with policy actors along the policy trajectory. It also uses a typology of contextual dimensions, provide by Braun, Ball, Maguire and Hoskins (2011), to describe the local settings of schools to allow exploration of the impact of localised factors on school policy processes. This study thus makes a significant contribution to the research in policy analysis as it applies, and extends upon, the policy analysis approach of Ball and his colleagues (Ball, Hoskins, Maguire & Braun, 2011; Braun, Ball, Maguire & Hoskins, 2011; Braun, Maguire & Ball, 2010; Maguire, Ball & Braun, 2010), through its application in an Australian context, with a focus on school literacy policy relevant to the ECEC years.

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis consists of twelve chapters. This chapter, Chapter One, is the opening chapter for the thesis.

Chapter Two provides the contextual background to the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on ECEC teachers. It includes overviews of educational policy development in Australia, and WA, relevant to literacy and ECEC. The chapter thus explains how literacy education and ECEC each became points of focus in educational policy in Australia, and WA.
Chapter Three provides a critical review of the literature pertaining to the central concepts pertinent to this study, namely literacy, ECEC and educational policy. This chapter highlights the contestation and debate in the literature that is within each of these areas.

Chapter Four describes the theoretical underpinnings of this study. The chapter explains each theoretical framework in detail before presenting the dual complementary theoretical paradigms adopted in this study.

Chapter Five presents the methods. This chapter includes a description of the policy trajectory approach from which the research questions were derived. It progresses to describing the study’s research design, including explanation of the case study approach used in the study. The chapter also details data collection processes and data analysis procedures.

Chapters Six to Ten present the findings. Chapter Six presents findings from the analysis of data at the macro (national: Australia) level while Chapter Seven presents findings from the analysis of data at the meso (State: WA) level of the literacy policy trajectory investigated. Each presents the findings through two of the four policy contexts, namely those of policy influences and policy text production. Together, these two chapters describe the broad milieu of policy activity in which the production and enactment of school literacy policy occurred.

Chapters Eight to Ten present findings from micro (local: school) level of the literacy policy trajectory investigated through three case study schools. Each of these chapters begins by describing the school’s setting. Each chapter then progresses to the findings from the particular case study. In these chapters, the findings are presented through four of the policy contexts, namely those of policy influences, policy text production, policy practices (enactment) and policy outcomes.
Chapter Eleven presents the meta-analysis which compares and contrasts findings along the whole literacy policy trajectory investigated from macro (national: Australian), meso (State: WA) to micro (local: school) levels. Themes are extracted and discussed for each of the four policy contexts in relation to the literature. Ten theoretical propositions are presented on the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on ECEC teachers.

The thesis concludes with Chapter Twelve with an overview of policy evolution from when data collection concluded, in late 2012, to thesis submission, in mid 2017. The chapter then outlines future directions and implications for further research.
Chapter Two
Contextual Background

Introduction

This chapter presents the contextual background for this study, which aimed to investigate the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on early childhood education and care (ECEC) teachers. The study was located in selected public schools in the State of Western Australia (WA).

This chapter describes the educational policy environment in Australia, and WA, leading up to, and including, the time of data collection in 2012. It begins with an overview of relevant educational policy and related events, within and outside Australia, from the late 1900s to the time of this study. Following this, the chapter presents information about relevant policy and events within WA. In doing so, it provides the background as to how literacy education and ECEC became points of focus in educational policy in Australia, and WA.

Australian Educational Policy Development Prior to 2000s

In the late 1980s, a national agreement in education, the Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia (Australian Education Council, 1989), commonly called the Hobart Declaration, contained only minimal focus on literacy. The policy simply stated within its aims: “To develop in students: the skills of English literacy, including skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing” (Australian Education Council, 1989, p. 1). There was no mention of ECEC in this policy.

There was a significant shift in the late 1990s with the publication of Literacy for All: The Challenge for Australian Schools (Commonwealth of Australia, 1998).
This national policy, dedicated solely to literacy, accorded literacy with importance in the national educational arena. Literacy was recognised as foundational for learning and, accordingly, *Literacy for All: The Challenge for Australian Schools* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1998) detailed a national plan for the development of students’ literacy skills.

The overall aim in *Literacy for All: The Challenge for Australian Schools* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1998) was to achieve improvements in the literacy skills of Australian students, with some emphasis given to the importance of beginning this focus on literacy during the ECEC years in schools. The policy stipulated goals to be achieved and detailed strategies for implementation. For instance, it provided for the development of national benchmarks for literacy achievement, with students to be assessed against these benchmarks at regular intervals throughout their schooling. Assessments were also intended to occur when children entered the schooling system; that is, in the ECEC years in schools.

However, national implementation of various strategies contained in *Literacy for All: The Challenge for Australian Schools* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1998) seemed restricted. The Australian Federal Government holds minimal jurisdictional powers in education in Australia. Constitutionally, Australia’s six States, including WA, the location of this study, and two Territories maintain governance over education in their jurisdiction.

As the twentieth century closed, there was signed a second national agreement in education, this being the *Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century* (Australian Education Council, 1999), commonly called the *Adelaide Declaration*. The *Adelaide Declaration* (Australian Education Council, 1999) explicitly accorded education with an important role in the
development of the nation and Australian society, opening with: “Australia's future depends upon each citizen having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society. High quality schooling is central to achieving this vision.” (Australian Education Council, 1999, p. 1). This policy contained minimal explicit mention of literacy or ECEC.

Public Debate and Government Reviews about Literacy Education

During the first decade of the 2000s, there arose much public debate about literacy education within the Australian education system. This reflected debates in other parts of the world, much of which was centred on how literacy was being taught. For instance, soon after the release of Literacy for All: The Challenge for Australian Schools (Commonwealth of Australia, 1998) and the Adelaide Declaration (Australian Education Council, 1999), there was published the report of an international review into the teaching of reading based in the United States of America, namely Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction (National Reading Panel, 2000). Amongst the numerous recommendations, the report highlighted the importance of teaching reading through the explicit teaching of skills, such as knowledge about letter-sound correspondences, early in a child’s reading development. At that time, whole language teaching of literacy, characterised by teachers immersing children in reading and writing real texts, was common in that country. The report positioned explicit teaching in tension with whole language teaching. These literacy pedagogical approaches are critiqued and reviewed in Chapter Three.
In Australia during this time, public organisations, such as People Lobbying Against Teaching Outcomes, and freelance commentators in the media claimed that there was a fall in Australian education standards. Much of the blame for the fall in standards was placed on the outcomes-based curriculum approach, which was predominantly in use across Australia at the time, with a subsequent predominant call for a return of content-based curriculum approaches. These organisations and commentators claimed that the fall in literacy standards in particular was a consequence of teaching literacy through holistic, whole language methods which were common in schools at that time. They claimed that whole language teaching of literacy did not allow for teaching essential literacy content to children. The debate thus placed in opposition whole language literacy teaching and the step-by-step teaching of explicit skills of literacy, such as knowledge about letter-sound correspondences, with explicit teaching methods being favoured (Snyder, 2008).

The debate in favour of explicit teaching of literacy in Australia received further support through an open letter addressed to the then Federal Minister of Education, Dr Brendan Nelson, signed by a group of Australian academics working within the areas of linguistics, cognitive science and psychology (Nelson et al., 2005). In this letter, the writers expressed their joint opinion that the holistic, whole language approach was ineffective in teaching literacy in Australia, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The writers asserted that beginning readers needed to be instead explicitly taught skills, such as knowledge about letter-sound correspondences.

In response to this letter, and the debate itself, the Australian Federal Government commissioned a review into the teaching of reading in Australia, the report of which is *Teaching reading: National inquiry into the teaching of literacy*
(Rowe, 2005). This report was published around the same time of a report of another international government commissioned review into the teaching of literacy, this time from the United Kingdom, this being the *Independent review of the teaching of early reading: The final report* (Rose, 2006). A few years later, the National Early Literacy Panel in America published a report of a meta-analysis conducted of research in the area of early literacy development (National Early Literacy Panel, 2009). The report identified a range of specific variables that positively correlated with literacy development, birth to age five, and many of these pertained to explicit skills and knowledge, such as alphabet knowledge and ability to write own name.

There were many similarities in the findings and recommendations of these aforementioned Australian and international government commissioned reviews. Each predominantly centred on reading when reviewing literacy and each called for the explicit teaching of skills and knowledge, such as knowledge about letter-sound correspondences. However, each also stressed that explicit teaching needed to be balanced with ‘in-context’ teaching to allow students to apply these skills to various reading, and writing, contexts. The recommendations of each review also emphasised the importance of ensuring solid foundations for reading, and literacy, learning were established in the early years. This brought some focus in the debate on the role of ECEC in literacy learning.

Of particular relevance for the Australian context, recommendations from *Teaching reading: National inquiry into the teaching of literacy* (Rowe, 2005) included a proposal for increased accountability on schools concerning the progress of students’ literacy learning in Australia. Thus, the report reiterated from *Literacy for All: The Challenge for Australian Schools* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1998) the case for national assessment and benchmarking of students’ literacy learning
throughout their schooling and assessments of students as they entered school. This reflected the increasing importance being placed in Australia by the Australian Federal Government on students’ literacy performances in relation to international testing regimes, being mainly the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). The next section of the chapter will explain the background to such a focus, so considering the impact of other global events on Australia’s literacy educational policy.

Role of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

The OECD was created in 1961. Through various activities, the powers of the OECD in global educational governance substantially increased over time so that by the end of the twentieth century, the OECD was recognised as a major influence on how member nations shaped their education systems (Ozga & Lingard, 2007; Sellar & Lingard, 2013; Teodoro & Estrela, 2010; Yates & Young, 2010).

One of the main mechanisms by which the OECD achieved this influential role was through conducting, and publicly reporting on, various surveys on aspects of member nations’ education systems. A given nation’s performances, as reported through these surveys and reports, came to be seen as a reflection of their international competitiveness in a growing global knowledge economy and, consequently, a measure of their economic prosperity (Sellar & Lingard, 2013).

PISA constitutes one of these surveys. Administered by the OECD to fifteen year olds every three years, PISA comprises of assessments in mathematics, reading and science. These three areas are assessed near the end of students’ compulsory schooling as competence in each is considered to be foundational to students’
ongoing education. First administered in 2000, performances in PISA are thus intended to reflect how well that particular nation’s education system has equipped students with the required knowledge and skills for ongoing education. However, the public availability of these results means that results in PISA have also become a measure of the country’s international competitiveness in the global knowledge economy, with this reflecting an underpinning global competitive neoliberal ideology (Sellar & Lingard, 2013). Chapter Three critiques the literature on the impact of globalisation and neoliberalism in educational policy, and the influential role of the OECD in global education governance.

Furthermore, a nation’s performance in the reading aspect of PISA have been positioned as an indication of those citizens’ literacy skills overall. Literacy ‘rates’, reflective in scores in this, and other, testing regimes, have become important indicators of educational and cultural aspects of a nation (Wyatt-Smith, 2000). They have become viewed as almost a measure of the degree of civilization of a country (Wray, 2004). In this increasingly globalised, and neoliberal, competitive world, the literacy skills of a nation’s citizens have become positioned as a reflection of the nation’s international positioning, and economic prosperity (Diaz & Makin, 2002; Freebody & Wyatt-Smith, 2004). Literacy education has thus become an important focus for countries.

During the first decade of the 2000s, Australia dropped in ranking in PISA from being second in reading (OECD, 2004), when compared to other participating nations, to being seventh in reading by 2006 (OECD, 2007). Thus, Australia’s literacy rates, and international positioning, were perceived to be falling (Snyder, 2008).
Furthermore, and of relevance to this investigation, the OECD conducts regular surveys and reports of ECEC in various nations. These report on service provision and provide comparative data in relation to a range of outcomes. For instance, *Starting Strong II: Early childhood education and care* (OECD, 2006), hereafter called *Starting Strong II*, provided publicly available comparative data on various aspects of ECEC services in participating countries. It highlighted the very complex and multi-layered system of policy development, funding and provision of ECEC in Australia at that time. The international comparative data did not present the Australian ECEC system favourably in relation to other participating nations. Later inserted into an Australian national policy titled *Investing in the Early Years – A National Early Childhood Development Strategy: An Initiative of the Council of Australian Governments* (Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2009a), the data from *Starting Strong II* (OECD, 2006) was used by the Australian Federal Government to reinforce the case for change within the ECEC sector in Australia.

Thus, by the time of the early 2000s, the world had become increasingly globalised, with neoliberal underpinnings. The powers of the OECD in global educational governance had increased through the organisation’s implementation of various neoliberal competitive measures. According to the findings of OECD reports, such as PISA results (OECD, 2004, 2007) and *Starting Strong II* (OECD, 2006), literacy scores relative to other countries were falling in Australia and the Australian ECEC system was also not producing the desired results compared with other countries. The results of these international surveys contributed to the public impression in Australia that the Australian education system was failing. Public confidence in the Australian education system was low and Australia’s international
competitiveness in the global knowledge economy, and economic prosperity, appeared to be under threat.

**The ‘Education Revolution’**

The time seemed ripe in the Australian educational policy environment for an ‘education revolution’ (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), 2008), this being the essential message of an education policy of the Federal Australian Labor Party. Once elected, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, with his Education Minister, Julia Gillard, quickly reinforced, and put into action the elements of the ‘education revolution’.

Central to this ‘revolution’ was acknowledgement of the role of education to the growth of the nation’s economy. The policy stated: “Quality education is good for our economy, good for our community and good for individuals. It will help create more jobs and higher wages and will create better opportunities for all Australians” (DEEWR, 2008, p. 6). Basic literacy (and numeracy) skills, developed through engagement with quality education beginning in ECEC, were positioned in the document as foundational for later school learning and to enable Australian citizens’ active participation in Australian society, and the globalised world. Improvements in educational outcomes thus became the imperative, with attention to both literacy education and ECEC central within the overarching goal of Australia achieving economic growth and prosperity.

Following the *Hobart Declaration* (Australian Education Council, 1989) and the *Adelaide Declaration* (Australian Education Council, 1999), the third national agreement on education was prepared and ratified later in 2008 by all Education Ministers around Australia. This is the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals*
for Young Australians (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), 2008), hereafter called the Melbourne Declaration. This nationally agreed to framework for education in Australia came to be seen to set the direction for education for the next decade.

The Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008) detailed the changes in Australian education intended to achieve the desired improvements in educational outcomes that were deemed required to rectify Australia’s falling international positioning, and enhance economic growth and prosperity. Of relevance to this investigation into the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on ECEC teachers, the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008) detailed strategies to improve literacy outcomes for students and heralded change for ECEC. It encompassed many of the recommendations of the aforementioned Teaching reading: National inquiry into the teaching of literacy (Rowe, 2005).

The Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008) thus essentially presented the aims for Australian education of the Australian Federal Government. However, the powers of the Australian Federal Government to implement policy with force seemed restricted as educational governance remained firmly in the hands of individual State and Territory Governments. Funding arrangements that subsequently eventuated accorded the Australian Federal Government with some control over education across Australia. It is to an explanation of these funding arrangements that the chapter now turns.
The Council of Australian Governments

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) was formed in 1992. Chaired by the Prime Minister of Australia, COAG is comprised of representatives from Federal, State and Territory Governments around Australia. It meets regularly to consider and co-ordinate government activities, including that of education.

Over the years, COAG has instigated numerous funding arrangements to support implementation of various initiatives across Australia. These funding arrangements are positioned to address perceived fiscal imbalances across governments within Australia to ensure States and Territories, with smaller populations than others, are not disadvantaged by a lower capacity to raise revenue themselves. In the educational arena, these funding arrangements provide financial support for implementation of specific strategies, aimed to improve educational outcomes. Thus, the funding arrangements agreed to at the level of COAG contribute to according increased powers in educational governance to the Australian Federal Government over the States and Territories (Lingard, 2011; Welch, 2010).

Following the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008), numerous national partnership agreements were signed at the level of COAG between the Australian Federal and State and Territory Education Ministers. These detailed funding arrangements between the Australian Federal Government and States and Territories to facilitate implementation of the ‘commitments to action’ detailed in the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008). The States and Territories upheld their constitutional powers and jurisdiction in education. However, these partnerships, and the funding arrangements contained within, enabled the Australian Federal Government to implement particular foci in education, thus increasing their powers in educational governance over the States and Territories (Reid, 2009, October 3).
National Funding Agreements: Literacy and ECEC

Following the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008), there were three national partnership agreements signed at the level of COAG that are of relevance to this study of the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on ECEC teachers. These were the *National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy* (COAG, 2008b), *National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education* (COAG, 2008a) and the *National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care* (COAG, 2009c).

The *National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy* (COAG, 2008b), provided funding to implement specific strategies to improve literacy outcomes in selected schools throughout Australia. One of the central aims of the funding was to close the gap in outcomes between high achieving and low achieving students, so addressing issues of equity in literacy learning. These strategies were to be implemented across the whole school, including the ECEC years. In this way, the *National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy* (COAG, 2008b) acted upon commitments made by the Australian governments through the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008) to develop the literacy skills of all Australian students.

The *National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education* (COAG, 2008a) and the *National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care* (COAG, 2009c) funded major reforms to ECEC in Australia. Ensuring sound foundations for learning were established in the ECEC years was recognised by the Australian Federal Government as vital for later success in schooling, and for equipping students with the skills to contribute towards
a growing Australian economy (DEEWR, 2008). These funding agreements acted upon commitments made by the Australian governments through the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008). They provided the funding that eventually underpinned Investing in the Early Years – A National Early Childhood Development Strategy: An Initiative of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG, 2009a), the strategic plan for the ECEC sector in Australia. Through these various agreements and policies, the governance of ECEC in Australia in school based services was brought together with other services, such as daycare services, under the one overarching banner of ‘early childhood education and care’ (ECEC). ECEC was firmly on the national agenda in educational reform.

Two particular strategies funded through these aforementioned agreements are of significance to this investigation. One is the National Quality Framework and the other is Universal Access.

The National Quality Framework was introduced in its entirety in 2012. First detailed within the National Quality Agenda in Investing in the Early Years – A National Early Childhood Development Strategy: An Initiative of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG, 2009a), and funded through the aforementioned agreements, the National Quality Framework comprises of four key components:

1. A National Quality Standard,
2. Enhanced and more rigorous regulatory arrangements for ECEC services,
3. A new and revised quality rating system for services involved in ECEC,
4. An Early Years Learning Framework to provide guidance in curriculum and for educators working in the area of ECEC, specifically birth to five years of age.

Through funding provided by the *National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care* (COAG, 2009c), there also eventuated a five year commitment by the Australian Federal Government to ‘Universal Access’. This was to provide funding to States and Territories to ensure that, by 2013, every child in Australia would have access to a non-compulsory, play-based 15 hours per week programme lead by a qualified teacher in the 12 months prior to full time schooling. This was variously called Preschool, Kindergarten and Pre-Preparatory around Australia. Some of these programmes were located within the daycare system, others were in community based centres and others were located in schools.

Through the *National Education Agreement* (COAG, 2009b) that soon followed the aforementioned individual funding agreements for literacy education and ECEC, all States and Territory Education Ministers agreed to numerous targets and performance measures associated with the overall national education reform agenda committed to through the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008). With the signing of this agreement, the scene was set for the Australian Federal Government to exercise increasing control over governance of education in Australia in order to achieve their overarching goal of enhanced international competitiveness (Reid, 2009, October 3).
A National Curriculum for School Aged Students in Australia

As part of the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008), and funded through the *National Education Agreement* (COAG, 2009b), Australia’s first national curriculum emerged. Up until 2008, each State and Territory had been developing their own curricula. This meant there were differences in the curriculum being taught to students in different parts of the country. The national curriculum is an inaugural common curriculum for all students in Australia. It is aimed to bring consistency in curriculum for students across Australia, so allowing a degree of national governance in education across Australia.

Development of the national curriculum was initially coordinated through the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs. Through this department, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), a statutory Australian Federal Government funded authority, was created to continue development of the curriculum. Through consultation with numerous reference groups across Australia, ACARA produced various papers and policies outlining the proposed national curriculum, such as *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Version 3.0* (ACARA, 2011b). Variations in versions of similarly titled papers and policies reflected the various stages of consultation. In *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Version 3.0* (ACARA, 2011b), literacy is positioned as having a foundational role in the subsequent development of students’ learning in school in other curriculum areas, and for participation in Australian society. Chapter Three critically reviews the literature relevant to defining literacy.

On 14 October 2011, the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs ratified the Foundation to Year 10 Achievement Standards for the first four learning areas of the national curriculum, called the
The Australian Curriculum: Version 2.0 (ACARA, 2011a) begins in ‘Foundation’, this being the year before Year One and when formal schooling in Australia starts. Known variously around Australia as Kindergarten, Preparatory, Reception, Pre-Primary or Transition, students in ‘Foundation’ are between four to five years of age. In ratifying the Australian Curriculum: Version 2.0 (ACARA, 2011a), the Federal, State and Territory Governments of Australia thus demonstrated support for the notion that the foundations of formal education began in these still relatively early years of a child’s life, and was built on from there.

A National Curriculum for ECEC Students in Australia

The National Quality Framework, first detailed in Investing in the Early Years – A National Early Childhood Development Strategy: An Initiative of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG, 2009a), included a national curriculum for children aged birth to five years. This is Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (DEEWR for COAG, 2009), hereafter called The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).

The EYLF (DEEWR for COAG, 2009) provides broad guidelines to facilitate learning in children from birth to five in various settings, including schools, across Australia. It advocates for holistic approaches through various pedagogies, such as play-based and intentional teaching. The curriculum caters for children’s learning in a range of domains that include social-emotional as well as academic areas (Connor, 2012). A joint discussion paper produced by Early Childhood Australia, a professional organisation for ECEC educators, and ACARA provides educators with guidance on how the EYLF is linked with the Australian Curriculum: Version 2.0
(ACARA, 2011a) (Connor, 2012). The research about ECEC curriculum and pedagogy is critiqued in Chapter Three.

This was the first time a national curriculum was produced for children in the before school years in Australia. Thus, it reflected recognition by the Australian Federal Government of the importance of providing quality education in these years to establish solid foundations for later learning in school, and participation in life. It was also further indication of the Australian Federal Government’s increasing national governance in education.

**National Testing Regimes: Literacy and ECEC**

The report from the national inquiry commissioned by the Australian Federal Government into literacy teaching, namely *Teaching reading: National inquiry into the teaching of literacy* (Rowe, 2005), recommended that the progress of Australian students’ literacy learning needed to be monitored closely through ongoing data collection. Through the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008) that followed, there were commitments made to ensure the accountability of the Australian education system to the public in achieving the goal of enhanced international competitiveness through improved outcomes, and this included in literacy. These commitments were reinforced through performance targets stipulated in the *National Education Agreement* (COAG, 2009b). Up to this time, there had been minimal data collected nationally on the performance of Australian students. Accordingly, two national testing regimes were developed and implemented that are relevant to this investigation into the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on ECEC teachers. These are the Australian Early
Developmental Index (AEDI) and the National Assessment Program-Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN).

Based upon a similar instrument in Canada, the AEDI was first implemented in 2009. Implemented every three years, the AEDI is aimed at providing the data necessary to monitor progress in the ECEC sector nationally. It assesses children’s learning and development as they enter the year before formal schooling, generally when children are between four to five years of age. This is Pre-Primary in WA, where this study is located. The AEDI thus provides a ‘snapshot’ of children’s development within a given community.

Children are assessed through the AEDI by their teacher in five areas. Two of these areas measure literacy, namely communication skills and language and cognitive skills. The teacher speaks with and listens to the child; that is, there are no written literacy assessments. The results of the AEDI are used by governments, communities and schools to plan and implement strategies to improve learning outcomes in ECEC through programmes provided prior to formal schooling (Connor, 2012). Through the inclusion of literacy measures, the AEDI acknowledged early literacy development, particularly oral language, as being vital for future learning.

NAPLAN was established to fulfil ‘commitments to action’ made in the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008) for accountability on the Australian education system in regards to students’ literacy learning outcomes. NAPLAN was initially managed under the direction of the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs and then came to be managed under the direction of ACARA. Prior to the instigation of NAPLAN, there had been no national collection or comparisons of data on the performances of students in
literacy. Each State and Territory had been annually assessing the literacy (and numeracy) skills of students in Years Three, Five, Seven and Nine of schooling. For instance, in WA, the location of this study, this was done through the Western Australian Literacy and Numeracy Assessment programme.

Like the State and Territory assessment programmes that preceded it, NAPLAN is a written assessment that annually assesses the literacy skills in reading comprehension, writing and spelling, of all students in Years Three, Five, Seven and Nine of school. In NAPLAN, there is the addition of an assessment in grammar. Unlike its precedents in States and Territories, NAPLAN is a national test, developed and implemented on a national basis.

The results of NAPLAN are published online through the MySchool website (https://www.myschool.edu.au/), established and managed by ACARA since 2010. This allows for detailed comparisons to be made of students’ performances on the same tests with year level peers around Australia. Additionally, the performances of education systems of States and Territories can be analysed and compared to others. Through the aforementioned National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy (COAG, 2008b), selected schools receive money from the Australian Federal Government based upon their NAPLAN results to effect improved results in future testing. The public availability of results, together with the provision of funding based upon these results, positions NAPLAN as a ‘high-stakes’ testing regime.

The chapter has thus far described how literacy education and ECEC each became areas of intense focus in national educational policy in Australia. The next section briefly describes the configuration of schooling in WA, the location of this study that investigated the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an
Australian context, with a focus on ECEC teachers. The chapter then progresses to describing how literacy education and ECEC became central foci within WA’s educational policy.

Public Schooling in WA

At the time of data collection in 2012, public schooling in WA comprised of Kindergarten through to Year Twelve. Primary school in WA spanned Kindergarten to Year Seven. ECEC in public schooling in WA comprised Kindergarten to Year Two. Secondary school in WA consisted of Year Eight to Year Twelve, with students being required to remain in a form of formal education until the age of 17. Kindergarten, for students aged three and a half to four and a half years at entry, and Pre-Primary, for students aged four and a half to five and a half years at entry, were included in the primary school sector and taught by teachers and education assistants employed by the State Government funded Department of Education (DoE) in WA under the Schools Education Act, 1999. However, these years were non-compulsory; that is, compulsory schooling was Year One, for students aged five and a half to six and a half years of age at entry, to Year Twelve.

In most other States and Territories in Australia, three and a half to four and a half year old children are provided with education within mostly daycare and community centres. The placement of three and a half to four and a half year old children within the schooling sector in WA is thus different to other parts of Australia. In WA, ‘Universal Access’ funding, received through the National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care (COAG, 2009c), is used to fund Kindergarten from 11 hours to 15 hours per week for each student in WA. Individual schools determine the
configuration of a Kindergarten child’s attendance. For instance, some schools offer a two and a half day a week program while others offer a five day fortnight (three days one week, two days the next).

**Educational Policy Development in WA: Literacy and ECEC**

As the twenty-first century dawned there was much debate about literacy teaching methods and curricula in WA, the location of this study. The debate mirrored that of the rest of Australia, and internationally, with concerns being expressed that curriculum and pedagogy approaches current at the time were not producing the best results in literacy (and numeracy). Consequently, the State Government of WA commissioned the *Literacy and numeracy review taskforce: The final report* (Department of Education and Training (DET), WA, 2006).

In 2008, NAPLAN was administered for the first time and results were not positive for WA. Students’ performances were reported to be at a lower level in comparison to that of their age peers in other States and Territories (*National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy: Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy*, 2008). In that same year, there were also specific concerns being expressed about results in the ECEC years of school, this being prior to NAPLAN. In a study that compared the literacy growth of students in the year prior to formal schooling in WA, being Pre-Primary, to a national sample, students in WA were reported as having a slower rate of growth than their peers in other parts of Australia (Louden, Rohl & Hopkins, 2008). Thus, not only was the State achieving poorly in literacy in NAPLAN in Years Three, Five, Seven and Nine of school, but results were also poor in the ECEC years, these being prior to NAPLAN.
The WA State Government funded education department, headed by a newly appointed Director General (DG), used policy to enforce a suite of mechanisms to improve these results, and the State’s positioning. These encompassed recommendations from the aforementioned *Literacy and numeracy review taskforce: The final report* (DET (WA), 2006) and were reflective of the national plan for education, namely the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008). They included policies such as *Director General’s Classroom First Strategy* (DoE (WA), 2007) and the *Plan for Public Schools 2008-2011* (DET (WA), 2008).

Three main strategies relevant to this investigation were emphasised in these State policies: more time to be devoted to literacy teaching in classrooms, whole of school planning of approaches and curriculum in literacy through creation and implementation of school literacy policies, and a focus on implementing strategies for improvements in the ECEC years of schooling (DET (WA), 2008; DoE (WA), 2007). The education department also put into place various accountability measures based upon data collected at the school and national levels, this being predominantly data from NAPLAN testing (DET (WA), 2008). Thus, through these policies, literacy was heralded as an important area of focus, with this focus, and subsequent improvements, intended to begin in ECEC. However, the DoE (WA) recognised that there was minimal data being collected in WA on performances of students in literacy during the ECEC years, which are prior to NAPLAN testing. Accordingly, the department implemented the On-Entry Assessment Program in 2009.

The On-Entry Assessment Program assesses students’ learning in literacy (and numeracy) in Pre-Primary, the year before compulsory schooling at the time of this investigation. It is similar to the AEDI implemented nationally, in that each is implemented by an adult to Pre-Primary students. However, unlike the AEDI, the
On-Entry Assessment Program is conducted annually and assesses student’s learning in literacy and numeracy only. Also, in regards to literacy, the On-Entry Assessment Program additionally assesses aspects of student’s reading and writing. Results from the On-Entry Assessment Program can be used to enable planning and implementation of individualised learning programmes for students during that same year (Kriening, 2012, April 3). At the time of data collection, modules of the On-Entry Assessment Program were being trialled in many public schools in WA for implementation in Years One and Two. Schools will then be able to collect information about students’ literacy achievement on a yearly basis leading up to assessment of these students in Year Three in NAPLAN. The On-Entry Assessment Program thus has the potential to provide schools with data on students’ literacy learning prior to the nationally implemented NAPLAN assessments in Year Three (Kriening, 2012, April 3). This can enable appropriate early intervention strategies to be put into place to ensure students’ adequate performance in NAPLAN (Kriening, 2012, April 3).

Through the combination of the On-Entry Assessment Program and NAPLAN, public schools in WA can have data on students’ literacy learning from the early years onwards. Principals are encouraged by DoE (WA) to use this data to set targets for improvement in literacy outcomes in their school literacy policies for all year levels, including ECEC (Kriening, 2012, April 3). Data was thus being positioned to be used in WA public schools to inform school improvement programmes, with the aim of enhancing the State’s, and Australia’s, competitiveness.

In 2010, the first round of the appointment of Independent Public Schools (IPS) was announced in WA. These public schools remain under the jurisdiction of the DoE (WA) and continue to receive funding from this department based on the
number of students enrolled. However, this funding is inclusive of additional funding schools may receive for children with special needs or for other programmes, such as programmes for children with English as a second language. This creates a ‘one-line budget’ for the school. The main point of difference between IPS and other public schools is that IPS schools have the flexibility to use their ‘one-line budget’ as they see fit to meet local needs, on the proviso that they also achieve improved learning outcomes. For instance, through the IPS funding model, schools are able to re-distribute resources towards targeted literacy programmes in different ways to non-IPS schools.

At the time of this study, some public schools in WA were receiving other additional funding, targeted to achieve improved NAPLAN results, through the Australian Federal Government funded Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership Program. This programme extends from the National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy (COAG, 2008b) and provides selected schools in WA with funding specifically to implement strategies to improve outcomes in literacy (and numeracy) in NAPLAN.

Poor results in NAPLAN persisted in WA (National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy: Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy, 2009; National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy: Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy, 2010). In this environment of persistent poor results, the DoE (WA) published Progressing Classroom First (DoE (WA), 2011a) to provide direction to schools on changes required to achieve improvements, and enhance the State’s positioning.

Around this time, issues emerged specific to the context of literacy teaching in ECEC in schools in WA. There was a perception emanating from DoE (WA) that
teaching literacy in holistic ways in the ECEC years of school, through a predominantly play-based pedagogy, rather than explicitly teaching literacy skills, was contributing to WA’s persistent poor results in the national testing regime (DoE (WA), 2011b). Furthermore, there were two national curriculum documents intended for the ECEC years in WA public schools, namely the Australian Curriculum: 
Version 2.0 (ACARA, 2011a), for students in Foundation (equivalent to Pre-Primary in WA) to Year Ten and the EYLF (DEEWR for COAG, 2009), being for students from birth to age five, when children attended Kindergarten and Pre-Primary in WA. They seemed to overlap in coverage within the ECEC years of schooling while differing in philosophy and definition of key areas of learning, such as literacy (Connor, 2012). There was debate and contention for ECEC teachers in public schools in WA in regards to which national curriculum to prioritise. 

It was thus unsurprising that a review of the educational practices in the ECEC years in public schools in WA found both a “disparate and diverse range of curriculum documents” (Tayler, 2010, p, 14) as well as diversity in pedagogy (Tayler, 2010). The impression created was that the State’s poor literacy results in NAPLAN were partly attributable to this contention over curriculum and pedagogy in the ECEC years in schools. The calls became stronger for change in literacy curriculum and pedagogy in the ECEC years in schools. Subsequently, the DoE (WA) published an inaugural policy intended for the ECEC years, namely The Early Years of Schooling: An Initiative of the Director General’s Classroom First Strategy (DoE (WA), 2011b). The policy provided direction to schools on changes required in the ECEC sector to support achievement of the desired improvements.
Gonski Review

As the first decade of the twenty-first century closed, educational standards in Australia appeared to be falling, as measured through results on the OECD’s PISA. Australia had dropped further from being seventh in reading by 2006 (OECD, 2007) and 2009 (Thomson, De Bortoli, Nicholas, Hillman & Buckley, 2010) to being tenth in 2012 (Thomson, De Bortoli & Buckley, 2013). Furthermore, the gap in performances between students from high and low socioeconomic levels was not lessening.

An Australian Federal Government commissioned panel, headed by David Gonski, was given the brief to develop a funding system to achieve quality and equity within the overall goal of improved outcomes in the Australian school system. The Review of funding for schooling: Final report (Gonski, 2011) recommended strengthening of current national reforms with funding across all sectors to be reviewed so that every child has access to best possible education, regardless of backgrounds. New funding arrangements for schools were to be considered by the Australian Federal Government in 2013.

In 2012, at the time of data collection, the State Government of WA was refusing to ‘sign up’ for the ‘Gonski funding’ that was to eventuate, intended to begin in 2013. At this time, the WA economy was flourishing, this being mostly attributable to a mining boom as a result of rising iron ore prices. Thus, the perception was that the State was able to fund its own programmes, including that of education.
Concluding Discussion

This study investigated the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on ECEC teachers. This chapter presented and discussed background information to this study, which was located in the State of WA, mainly in relation to educational policy.

Across Australia, there was public concern about the performances of students in literacy. It was perceived that Australia needed improved outcomes in education, including literacy education, to enhance the nation’s international positioning, as measured through performances in international testing regimes, such as the OECD’s PISA. The Australian Federal Government thus placed importance, through national educational policy, on students developing sound literacy skills, with this to begin in ECEC. This was positioned to contribute towards Australian students developing the skills and knowledge required to participate in the growing global knowledge economy, so enhancing Australia’s international competitiveness and ensuring Australia’s economic growth. Thus, education was on the country’s economic agenda.

In the pursuit of this aim, there were many policy moves initiated at the level of the Australian Federal Government to increase national governance in Australian education over States and Territories. There emerged two national curriculums, being for school aged students and children in the before school years, as well as numerous funding arrangements. To monitor progress towards this aim, national testing regimes in literacy and ECEC were introduced.

In WA, results in literacy in the national testing regime of NAPLAN were poor. The State’s education department, headed by a newly appointed DG, produced numerous policies with a central aim of improving results, beginning with
implementing strategies in the ECEC years. Public schools in WA were required to formulate school literacy policy in the pursuit of these improved outcomes, policy that was to be inclusive of the ECEC years in schools. However, the ECEC years of school in WA were beset with contention in the areas of curriculum and pedagogy.

This was the contextual background for this investigation into the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on ECEC teachers. The next chapter will critique the literature relevant to the key concepts that underpin this study, namely literacy, ECEC and educational policy.
Chapter Three
Literature Review

Introduction

The aim of this study was to investigate the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on early childhood education and care (ECEC) teachers. This chapter critically reviews the theoretical and empirical literature in relation to the concepts central to the study.

The chapter is divided into two parts. Part One critiques the literature relevant to each of the study’s key underpinning concepts; namely literacy, ECEC and educational policy. Part Two brings together the key concepts in a critical review of recent research on educational policy particularly relevant to literacy and ECEC. The chapter concludes by highlighting the gaps in the literature that point to the need for the study.

Part One: Three Key Concepts

The sections below critically review the literature pertaining to the concepts of literacy, ECEC and educational policy, respectively.

Literacy: A Rich and Complex Construct

A critical review of the literature revealed numerous definitions of literacy, as outlined below. Each contributes to making literacy a rich and complex construct.

The traditional view of literacy. The traditional definition of literacy defines literacy as the ability to read and write using a set of skills to encode and decode written text (Anstey & Bull, 1996). In accordance with this definition, skills for reading and writing, such as letter-sound correspondences and alphabet
knowledge, are formally taught in a prescribed hierarchy in isolated, decontextualised ways to children once they enter school at around the age of six. Key features of such approaches include use of basal readers, which contain repetitive language (Anstey & Bull, 1996), and structured workbooks (Barratt-Pugh, 2000).

Teaching reading and writing in accordance with this traditional definition is supported by the work of maturational and developmental theorists (Barratt-Pugh, 2000; Crawford, 1995; Teale, 1995). Maturational theorists, such as Gesell (1949), claim that a child’s biological or maturational development before the age of six is insufficient for the child to engage in formal literacy learning. Although developmental theorists, such as Durkin (1966), also support formally teaching literacy skills in this way, they argue that maturational processes can be hastened through focused teaching. Accordingly, teachers can implement highly-structured direct instruction in ‘pre-reading’ and ‘pre-writing’ skill areas, such as visual and auditory discrimination (Barratt-Pugh, 2000; Teale, 1995), finger strengthening and pattern-making (Beecher & Arthur, 2001), to enhance development of literacy before the age of six.

**Literacy as a process.** Various researchers and theorists in the 1970s and 1980s framed literacy as more of a process than the traditional view acknowledged. For instance, Latham and Sloan (1979) names reading as an “information-processing activity” (Latham & Sloan, 1979, p. 3), describing this as a meaning making process during which the reader’s background knowledge and knowledge about language structures, termed the non-visual information, interacts with the print, or visual, information.
Reading as a process encapsulates schema theory of knowledge. According to Anderson (1984), a schema is a means of organising knowledge in the brain. As a person reads, knowledge is gained as information is slotted in, or leads to changes and modifications in, the schema (Anderson, 1984). Comprehension during reading happens when the expectations within the person’s schema on that topic are largely upheld by information in the text. In a study that examined the story recall of participants, Mandler and Johnson (1977) found that the structure of stories also have a schema, a particular ‘grammar’. They argue that recall, and comprehension, is facilitated when a story’s ‘grammar’ is in line with the reader’s schema for stories. Schema theory supports the notion that teaching children to read needs to be accompanied by activating and/or building up their knowledge base, or schema, in relation to the text, be that in relation to the topic of the text and/or the structure (McVee, Dunsmore & Gavelek, 2005).

Teaching writing as a process involves teachers guiding children through the writing process (Walshe, 1981). For instance, Walshe (1981) advises that the teacher first encourages the child to draft a piece of writing. Feedback includes teaching skills in the context of this writing with a focus on enhancing meaning. Using these new skills, the child refines, re-writes and completes the piece of writing. Christie (2005) comments that teachers do not appear to consistently include explicit teaching of genre characteristics when implementing the process writing approach (Walshe, 1981). Christie (2005), along with other genre theorists, thus stress that teachers should ensure children learn the specifics of genres, including text structures and language features, needed for writing in the later years of schooling for subject areas such as Science (Christie, 2005; Derewianka, 1990; Thwaite, 2006).
**The whole language movement.** The whole language movement, and accompanying philosophy and pedagogy, of the 1980s expanded the view of literacy beyond reading and writing to include oral language. This view also advocates viewing and teaching literacy as a process within holistic, social contexts (Au, 2004).

Cambourne (1988), considered the founder of the whole language movement (Fellowes & Oakley, 2010), argues that a child’s literacy development begins with, and emerges from, the child’s oral language development. Accordingly, Cambourne (1988) proposed that teachers can teach children reading and writing by mirroring in the classroom, using written texts, the conditions that have already proven successful in facilitating children’s oral language. Cambourne (1988) named eight ‘conditions’ namely immersion, demonstration, engagement, expectation, responsibility, approximation, use and response. For instance, teachers immerse the children in real literature, as opposed to basal readers. Teachers provide good models of written literacy and numerous learning opportunities that allow children to have meaningful engagement with reading and writing real, meaningful texts. Approximations are accepted as children learn and use skills within meaningful contexts and the teacher provides clear, explicit feedback to facilitate further learning.

A particular teaching method that reflects aspects of whole language philosophy is the language experience approach (Barr, Sadow & Blachowicz, 1990; Stahl & Miller, 1989). In this, children engage in, and talk about, real-life experiences related to the book’s topic; children talk about what they have learnt about the topic before either the teacher scribes what they say or they write themselves; children talk through their meaning making processes when reading. In this way, the child’s oral language is used in social contexts to facilitate the child’s written literacy in functional and meaningful ways (Morrow, 2009).
**Emergent literacy theory.** Barratt-Pugh (2000) argues that emergent literacy theory incorporates whole language philosophy. According to emergent literacy theory, the child’s reading and writing emerges along an oral to literate continuum (Crawford, 1995; Dickinson & McCabe, 2001; Teale, 1995). Oral language, as in whole language philosophy, remains central to, and provides the foundations for, a child’s literacy development (Au, 2004; Crawford, 1995; Diaz, Arthur, Beecher & McNaught, 2000; Dickinson & McCabe, 2001; McCardle, Cooper, Houle, Karp & Paul-Brown, 2001). Hence, within emergent literacy theory, literacy is seen as the communication of meaning using oral and written language modes such as speaking, listening, reading and/or writing (Crawford, 1995; Makin, Hayden & Diaz, 2000).

Emergent literacy theorists recognise that a child’s oral language development begins at birth and continues to be encouraged by parents and other carers through social interactions (Dickinson & McCabe, 2001; McCardle, Cooper, Houle, Karp & Paul-Brown, 2001). Furthermore, emergent theorists acknowledge the particularly important contribution to the child’s literacy development of those interactions which incorporate and value written literacy, such as shared book reading (Cairney & Munsie, 1992; McCardle et al., 2001; Teale, 1995).

As a child commences school with already developing oral language, emergent theorists argue that the foundations of written literacy are well in situ before a child enters formal schooling (Diaz, Arthur, Beecher & McNaught, 2000; McCardle, Cooper, Houle, Karp & Paul-Brown, 2001). The teacher’s role is to facilitate the child’s continued literacy learning in an integrated manner in contexts that involve real and meaningful interactions with oral and written texts (Crawford, 1995; Diaz et al., 2000). Hence, children use “writing to help them learn about reading ... reading to help them learn about writing ... oral language to help them
New language and literacy skills and knowledge, such as vocabulary and letter-sound correspondences, are taught to children in the context of these meaningful, oral language based learning experiences that extend the child’s knowledge from what they already know (Cambourne & Turbill, 2007; Dickinson & McCabe, 2001; Dickinson, McCabe, Anastasopoulos, Peisner-Feinberg & Poe, 2003). Teachers assess and monitor children’s development overall, rather than focus on just one skill area, such as letter-sound correspondences (McCardle, Scarborough & Catts, 2001).

**Phonics teaching.** Phonics is a method of teaching letter-sound correspondences that underpin decoding and encoding words (Mesmer & Griffith, 2005). Various researchers argue that, as English has an alphabetic code (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001; Mesmer & Griffith, 2005), the early implementation of phonics teaching facilitates development in the emergent reader and writer (Buckland & Fraser, 2008; Epstein, 2007; Foorman & Torgesen, 2001; Mesmer & Griffith, 2005). However, there is contention and debate in the literature concerning phonics teaching.

De Graaff, Bosman, Hasselman and Verhoeven (2009) identify three approaches for teaching letter-sound correspondences: synthetic phonics, in which children are taught individual letter-sound correspondences first to then blend together to make words; analytic, which involve teaching sets of letter combinations and analysing words in sound segments; and embedded, through which spelling patterns are taught in the context of predictable texts. The Clackmannanshire study in Scotland (Johnston, McGeown & Watson, 2012; Johnston & Watson, 2004) found that intensive systematic synthetic phonics instruction was more beneficial over other approaches for children’s literacy learning, particularly in facilitating
children’s word reading and spelling skills. Synthetic phonics is thus named as the main phonics teaching approach in the *Independent review of the teaching of early reading: The final report* (Rose, 2006) which, in turn, propelled synthetic phonics into many classroom literacy programmes (Ellis, 2007).

Synthetic and analytic phonics methods, as used in the Clackmannanshire investigations (Johnston, McGeown & Watson, 2012; Johnston & Watson, 2004), teach phonics in isolated and decontextualised settings. Krashen (2009) argues that decontextualised phonics teaching such as this produces superior ability in children to read words out of context, but not better reading comprehension skills. He claims that children learn to read, including developing the necessary letter-sound correspondence skills, by reading real texts, as in whole language pedagogy. However, Bowey (2006) asserts that whole language pedagogy does not allow for systematic synthetic phonics teaching. Pearson (2004) calls skills and strategy instruction the “unintended casualties” (Pearson, 2004, p. 221) of the whole language pedagogy. Morrow (2009) posits that the lack of skills teaching in whole language pedagogy may be as a result of misinterpretation of the whole language pedagogy or lack of skills in teachers to explicitly teach, at point of need, skills such as letter-sound correspondence in the context of reading and writing.

Wyse and Goswami (2008) criticised the design of the Clackmannanshire study (Johnston & Watson, 2004) as not rigorous enough to allow for true comparisons of the approaches. They concluded that one approach could not be seen as beneficial over the other. Furthermore, Wyse and Goswami (2008) claim that synthetic phonics teaching may be more appropriate for languages that have more consistent letter-sound correspondences or a more transparent orthography than English. Similar to Krashen (2009), Wyse and Goswami (2008) argue that skills
such as letter-sound correspondence for English literacy users need to be taught in context.

**Balanced literacy teaching.** Proponents of a ‘balanced’ literacy programme emerged in an attempt to reconcile these debates (Pearson, 2004). Such programmes combine whole language approaches and explicit teaching (Epstein, 2007; Pearson, 2004). Skills, such as letter-sound correspondences, are thus taught in meaningful contexts, with this maintaining whole language principles (Emmitt & Hornsby, 1996; Foorman & Torgesen, 2001; Gerde, Bingham & Wasik, 2012; McKie, Manswell Butty & Green, 2012; Wasik & Hindman, 2011; Wyse & Goswami, 2008). For instance, McKie, Manswell Butty and Green (2012) reported on their observations on how reading was being taught in demonstration early childhood classrooms in America. They found ‘balanced’ programmes in which children were being provided with lots of reading opportunities while also being taught skills explicitly, in context and at point of need. Wasik and Hindman (2011), in another example of a ‘balanced’ programme, reported on how skills in sound-letter correspondences were taught to children in the early years, in context, through discussion and subsequent joint construction of a ‘morning message’.

The literature revealed that other literacy skills can also be taught explicitly in meaningful contexts in ‘balanced’ programmes. For instance, McKeown and Beck (2014) reported how vocabulary was taught explicitly in the context of book-reading interactions within a ‘balanced’ literacy programme. Hence, within ‘balanced’ programmes, there can be specific times for teaching constrained skills (Paris, 2005), such as letter-sound correspondences, to the level of automaticity and mastery, while unconstrained skills (Paris, 2005), such as vocabulary and comprehension, can be facilitated alongside over time and in other contexts (Stahl, 2011). Similarly,
Callaghan and Madelaine (2012) demonstrated how phonological awareness skills were taught explicitly, but meaningfully, at set times while vocabulary and comprehension were facilitated through shared book reading contexts.

**The sociocultural view of literacy.** The sociocultural view of literacy expands the concept of literacy further to be seen as a political and ideological construct, reflecting particular world views (Cambourne & Turbill, 2007; Green 2003; Street, 1995, 1997, 2005), the teaching of which highlights issues of equity and power (Gee, 2012; Janks, 2010; Luke & Freebody, 1999; Street, 1995, 1997, 2005). Within the sociocultural frame, a person’s literacy is viewed as a set of literacy practices, or literacies, that are part of and reflect the person’s social and cultural world (Gonzalez, 2005; Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005; Purcell-Gates, Melzi, Najafi & Orellana, 2011). Each ‘literacy’ is seen as having its own set of rules (Gee, 1989, 2012).

The sociocultural theory of literacy emerged from studies conducted by ethnographic researchers such as Heath (1983) and Dyson (1993, 2003). Heath (1983) reported how children from three different cultural groups developed sets of literacy practices that differed to each other. She attributed these differences in literacy practices to the differences in the children’s cultural backgrounds. Dyson’s research (1993, 2003) revealed how children developed particular ‘literacies’ from their engagement in popular culture. Findings from both researchers contribute to the arguments that ‘literacy’ is more than a single construct. Instead, literacy is a socially and culturally dependent meaning making tool, being comprised of a set of practices that allows meaning to be made from texts in ways which meet the requirements of the particular social and cultural context in which that text, and the user, is placed.
Emergent theorists argue that children have well developed literacy by the time they encounter formal schooling (Dickinson & McCabe, 2001; McCardle, Cooper, Houle, Karp & Paul-Brown, 2001). Literacy, seen as a sociocultural practice, highlights the potential for children to possess a number of different literacies, developed from their engagement with the context, purpose and discourse of myriad different oral and written texts which they have encountered since birth (Gee, 2012; New London Group, 1996; Parr & Campbell, 2012; Street, 1997; Urbach, 2012).

Researchers thus argue that there is potential for each student in a classroom to possess a unique set of literacy practices reflective of the uniqueness in their sociocultural background (Dyson, 1993, 2003; Gonzalez, 2005; Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005; Hill, Comber, Louden, Rivolland & Reid, 1998a, 1998b; Janks, 2010; Lankshear, 1997; New London Group, 1996; Purcell-Gates, Melzi, Najafi & Orellana, 2011). Furthermore, a child’s literacy set may include different literacies than that required for schools (Dyson, 1993, 2003; Gee, 2012; Heath, 1983; Hill et al., 1998a, 1998b). If these differences are seen by teachers as ‘deficiencies’ in the child, rather than differences, it can restrict the child’s access to learning, and knowledge (Bartlett, 2008; Dyson, 1993, 2003; Gee, 2012; Hill et al., 1998a, 1998b; Makin, Hayden & Diaz, 2000; New London Group, 1996). Researchers thus implore teachers to ensure these differences do not become barriers to educational success (Luke & Freebody, 1999; New London Group, 1996; Purcell-Gates et al., 2011; Urbach, 2012). They suggest that teachers legitimise and include into the school curriculum the family and out-of-school literacy practices of all children (Gonzalez,
This is seen to create a ‘bridge’ between the child’s home and school literacy practices, so enabling the child access to the literacy practices required for school, and later learning (Dyson, 1993, 2003; Gee, 1989, 2012; Heath, 1983; Hill et al., 1998a, 1998b; Janks, 2010; Lankshear, 1997; New London Group, 1996; Purcell-Gates et al., 2011; Urbach, 2012).

**Multiliteracies and multimodality.** Within the sociocultural frame of literacy, children’s literacy practices can include ‘new’ literacies or ‘multiliteracies’ (New London Group, 1996), developed from engagement with sociocultural contexts embedded in the globalised and technology driven world of the twenty-first century. Activities such as ‘surfing’ the internet and using mobile phones present the literacy user with multimodal texts which have non-print modes, such as visual and aural, embedded within the print or sometimes with no print at all (Healy, 2003; Walsh, 2010, 2011). Making meaning from these multimodal texts requires development and use of different literacy skills (Healy, 2003; Hill & Nichols, 2004; Knobel & Lankshear, 2006; Lapp, Moss, & Rowsell, 2012; Walsh, 2010, 2011; Yelland, 2011). A multiliteracies pedagogy (New London Group, 1996) recognises and further facilitates in the classroom the literacies children have developed from myriad social and cultural contexts, including those from the digital, multimodal world, as well as other cultural groups (Lapp, Moss, & Rowsell, 2012; Walsh, 2010, 2011; Yelland, 2011).

**Critical literacy.** Proponents of the sociocultural perspective of literacy argue that children need to develop skills in critical literacy (Hill, Comber, Louden, Rivilland & Reid, 1998a, 1998b; Knobel & Healy, 1998; Wray, 2004). Through analysing and critiquing texts, be they in the oral, aural, visual or written modes,
Critical literacy practices help readers to question and uncover the attitudes, belief systems and values embedded within the texts (Comber, 1993, 2011; Knobel & Healy, 1998; Knobel & Lankshear, 2006; Paugh, Carey, King-Jackson & Russell, 2007; Wray, 2004). Critical literacy practices make explicit the ways in which language operates as a social practice (Janks, 2014) and allows children to understand the world that is embedded within the texts that are written, read and viewed (Freire & Macedo, 1987).

Thus, teaching literacy within the sociocultural frame necessitates an “inclusive pedagogy and enabling literacy curriculum” (Comber, 2011, p. 6). This curriculum needs to recognise the diversity and richness of literacy itself in the context of the diversity and richness of myriad literacies and sociocultural backgrounds which children bring to the classroom (Purcell-Gates, Melzi, Najafi & Orellana, 2011; Soler & Lambirth, 2011; Urbach, 2012). Luke and Freebody’s (1999) ‘four resources model’ allows for such a curriculum. It recognises and facilitates further children’s literacy development within a map of literacy practices, including that of critical literacy.

**Working definitions of literacy.** Teachers’ definitions of literacy influence decision making about what, and how, literacy is taught in the classroom (Fellowes & Oakley, 2010). There are various definitions of literacy to inform curriculum, as outlined above, and each phase and body of research contributes to an understanding of what literacy is (McVee, Dunsmore & Gavelek, 2005). Durrant and Green’s (2000) diagrammatic model of three intersecting dimensions of literacy, represented as circles, provides one way in which to encompass these various definitions of literacy. One circle encapsulates the traditional view with a focus on skills, such as letter-sound correspondences, while a second intersecting circle is used to recognise
how literacy is a set of practices embedded within social and cultural contexts, including within the digital world, and the third intersecting circle is used to highlight the importance of critical literacy.

Various researchers argue that attention to literacy in the classroom needs to begin in the ECEC years (Scull, Nolan & Raban, 2012) to establish solid foundations for later learning (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001). Furthermore, Wasik and Hindman (2005) contend that children who are still struggling with literacy by the end of early childhood are likely to continue to have difficulties later, making it important to identify difficulties in early literacy learners to allow for appropriate intervention. In a review of the literature, McCardle, Scarborough and Catts (2001) identified decoding difficulties as the main obstacle to literacy learning for many children in early childhood, making it important to assess decoding skills, such as alphabet knowledge and letter-sound correspondences. However, implementation of educational policy that predominantly focuses on testing of these constrained skills (Paris, 2005) in the ECEC years may reduce the focus on teaching other non-tested, but important, aspects of literacy, such as critical and digital literacy (Lobascher, 2011; Mills, 2008). Furthermore, the field of ECEC in general is beset with contention and controversy, particularly about curriculum and pedagogy. It is to a critical review of the research on these, and other, aspects of ECEC that this chapter now turns.
Principles and Practices in ECEC

This section reviews and critiques the literature on aspects of the field of ECEC. After first defining early childhood and reviewing the literature on how ‘quality’ ECEC is defined, the literature on ECEC curriculum and pedagogy is critically reviewed.

Early childhood defined. ‘Early childhood’ is defined as the period in a child’s life from birth to eight years of age (Johnston & Nahmad-Williams, 2009; Siraj-Blatchford & Woodhead, 2009). This period is when the child transitions from home and care settings into compulsory schooling, which begins around the world between five to seven years of age (Moss, 2013).

‘Quality’ in ECEC. Researchers argue that providing ‘quality’ ECEC establishes solid foundations for later learning (Anning, Cullen & Fleer, 2004; Bennett, 2013; Cochran, 2011; Lowenstein, 2011; Moss, 2013; Siraj-Blatchford & Woodhead, 2009; Whitebread & Coltman, 2008; Wood, 2008). For instance, a landmark longitudinal study, Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE), reported on the progress of children from pre-school through to compulsory schooling in England. Researchers found that those children who came from pre-school settings identified as having quality ECEC practices developed further in their academic learning (Sammons, Elliot, Sylva, Melhuish, Siraj-Blatchford & Taggart, 2004; Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004; Siraj-Blatchford, Taggart, Sylva, Sammons & Melhuish, 2008; Siraj-Blatchford & Woodhead, 2009).

The literature contained much debate about what constitutes ‘quality’ and how to assess it in ECEC. Many researchers assert that quality in ECEC settings should be seen as a broad, relative and subjective concept (Ceglowski & Bacigalupa, 2002; Logan, Press & Sumsion, 2012; Moss, 2014; Moss, Dahlberg & Pence, 2013;

However, Fenech (2011), in an extensive critique of the literature, found that ‘quality’ in ECEC programmes was predominantly described in universal, objective, quantifiable and measurable terms with reference to standards, regulatory measures and structural criteria, such as staffing ratios. Measuring ‘quality’ in numerical ways positions quality as amenable to regulation (Moss, Dahlberg & Pence, 2013; Phillips, Mekos, Scarr, McCartney & Abbott-Shim, 2000). This view of quality can become a source of tension for ECEC teachers who are trying to balance broader views of quality with what the service ‘measures’ as quality (Logan & Sumson, 2010).

Furthermore, Moss, Dahlberg and Pence (2013) argue that restricting ‘quality’ to what can be measured using various instruments also reflects a growing ‘trust’ in numbers and quantification in monitoring and describing learning in early childhood. In an instance of this, Bradbury (2014) describes how the results of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile, implemented to children aged five in Reception in England, transforms observational records of a child’s development over the Reception year into numbers to enable comparisons and judgements to be made on children’s learning. Bradbury (2013) contends that this, in turn, is effecting
change in teachers’ conception of the learner in ECEC, to someone who principally achieves test scores.

Regardless of how ‘quality’ of an ECEC programme is judged, an ECEC programme comprises of curriculum presented to learners through pedagogical practices. It is to a critical review of ECEC curriculum and pedagogy that the chapter now turns.

**Curriculum in ECEC.** Curriculum comprises the knowledge, skills and values that are planned to be taught (Scott, 2008). Traditional ECEC curriculum is broad, being structured within and through the social-emotional, physical, cognitive, language and spiritual domains rather than divided into specific learning areas, such as English (Fleer, 2011; Lee, 2006). Various researchers and theorists assert that this broad, domain-based curriculum is beneficial for the early childhood learner (Epstein, 2007; Fleer, Anning & Cullen, 2004; Moss, 2013; Rinaldi, 2004; Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004; Siraj-Blatchford & Woodhead, 2009; Soler & Miller, 2003; Whitebread & Coltman, 2008; Wood, 2008). For instance, Epstein (2007), supported by Whitebread and Coltman (2008), claim that it allows for learning in one domain to support learning in another.

Furthermore, various researchers and theorists particularly stress the need for inclusion of a focus on the social-emotional domain in the ECEC curriculum. For instance, Malaguzzi and Gandini (1993) and Whitebread and Coltman (2008) argue that a curriculum that includes learning within the social-emotional domain is particularly important as the interactions children have during learning experiences, and the relationships they subsequently form, are essential for further learning. Researchers from the EPPE study found that learning within the cognitive domain can be supported through learning within the socio-emotional domain (Sammons,
Elliot, Sylva, Melhuish, Siraj-Blatchford & Taggart, 2004; Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004; Siraj-Blatchford, Taggart, Sylva, Sammons & Melhuish, 2008; Siraj-Blatchford & Woodhead, 2009). The later work of Denham and Brown (2010) found that a focus on social-emotional skills during early childhood positively contributed to academic achievements. Nix, Bierman, Domitrovich and Gill (2013) demonstrated that curriculum that developed children’s social-emotional skills in early childhood enhanced literacy learning.

However, there is an increasing emphasis on academic content, including literacy, in the ECEC curriculum, this seen to be in response to demands to make curricula targeted towards learning in the next stage of schooling, and ensure success in standardised testing (Bennett, 2013; Brown & Pickard, 2014; Cochran, 2011; Mills, 2008; Moss, 2013; Polesel, Rice & Dulfer, 2014; Soler & Miller, 2003). Bodrova (2008) asserts that ECEC curricula that emphasise academic content does not necessarily guarantee later academic success. Conversely, Whitebread and Coltman (2008) describe the young child as thriving on intellectual challenge, supporting the inclusion of academic goals in an ECEC curriculum. However, Whitebread and Coltman (2008) also warn that emphasising academic content at the expense of other domains may be detrimental to children’s self esteem and confidence in learning.

**Pedagogy in ECEC.** Pedagogy comprises teaching practices used to promote students’ learning (Siraj-Blatchford, 2004). Various researchers claim that play-based pedagogy, that incorporates unstructured and structured play, is effective in teaching children in the early childhood period (Cochran, 2011; DeBaryshe & Gorecki, 2007; Fleer, 2011; Fleer, Anning & Cullen, 2004; Johnston & Nahmad-Williams, 2009; Lee, 2006; Malaguzzi & Gandini, 1993; McInnes, Howard, Miles &
There are various definitions and descriptions of play in the literature. For instance, Lee (2006) describes play as occurring when a child engages in self-directed exploration and discovery of their environment. McInnes, Howard, Crowley and Miles (2013) claim that an activity is play when choice and control remain with the child. Play is a pleasurable activity for a child (Barblett, 2010; Beecher & Arthur, 2001), even when requiring physical or mental effort (Beecher & Arthur, 2001). Researchers and theorists identify different types of play, such as symbolic play, active play, social-dramatic play (Barblett, 2010; Bodrova, 2008; Whitebread, Basilio, Kuvalja & Verma, 2012), solitary play, parallel play and co-operative play (Beecher & Arthur, 2001). It is argued that some types of play require different levels of cognitive development in the child. For instance, Bodrova (2008) claims that dramatic and symbolic play need a greater level of cognitive development than object manipulation, exploration and movement activities; that is, dramatic and symbolic play each requires the child to create an imaginary situation.

Play supports the teaching of a broad, holistic and integrated ECEC curriculum (Bennett, 2013). It facilitates holistic, meaningful, active, coherent and integrated learning (Bodrova, 2008; Fleer, Anning & Cullen, 2004; Lee, 2006; Moss, 2013; Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004; Siraj-Blatchford & Woodhead, 2009; Whitebread & Coltman, 2008; Wood, 2008) within and across all the domains of development (DeBaryshe & Gorecki, 2007; Fleer, 2011; McLachlan, Fleer & Edwards, 2010). Play provides the child with opportunities to practise and develop important skills and understandings on which to build later learning (Bodrova, 2008;
Lee, 2006; McInnes, Howard, Crowley & Miles, 2013; Whitebread, Basilio, Kuvalja & Verma, 2012), including dispositions for learning such as curiosity, resilience and creativity (Barblett, 2010). It is argued that children often exhibit and use skills competently in play before being able to demonstrate them in formal learning situations (Bodrova, 2008; Lee, 2006; McInnes et al., 2013).

Piaget (2005) argues that children’s learning during early childhood is enhanced through experiences that allow them to actively explore and choose what to engage in, and this can be through play (Siraj-Blatchford, 2004; Stephen, 2010). Implementing practices based upon the Piagetian view, many ECEC teachers become managers of play, stepping back from intervening in and/or controlling children’s play (McInnes, Howard, Miles & Crowley, 2011; Whitebread & Coltman, 2008). Wood (2004) and Stephen (2010) comment that teachers may consequently adopt a laissez-faire, ‘hands-off’ approach to children’s learning. McLachlan, Fleer and Edwards (2010) claim that this can produce long periods of undirected play, and this may not maximise learning. McInnes et al. (2011) reported, from interviews with ECEC teachers, that many teachers were not comfortable with adopting this approach to play in the classroom.

Researchers argue that Vygotsky’s theories (Vygotsky, 2004; Vygotsky & Kozulin, 2011), which emphasise the cultural, social and interactional dimensions of learning, and so differs in theoretical bases to Piaget, can be used by teachers in developing an effective play-based pedagogy (Dahlberg & Moss, 2004; Siraj-Blatchford, 2004). Vygotsky identified a zone of proximal development in the learner; that is, the difference between what a learner can do without help and what he or she can do with help. Through supportive interactions with an ‘expert’ adult or peer, a child’s knowledge can be co-constructed, and learning scaffolded, within the
child’s zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 2004; Vygotsky & Kozulin, 2011).

Play is considered to be an ideal context in which these supportive interactions can occur, with the teacher in the role as the ‘expert’ adult (Anning, Cullen & Fleer, 2004; Dahlberg & Moss, 2004; Jordan, 2004; Stephen, 2010; Wood, 2008). Through play, adults can scaffold children’s learning within the child’s zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 2004; Vygotsky & Kozulin, 2011), so providing the child with real intellectual challenge that is still at an appropriate developmental level (Cochran, 2011; Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2008; Whitebread & Coltman, 2008; Wood, 2008). The adult ‘tunes in’ to what is occurring in the child’s play and joins in to extend the child’s ideas (Meacham, Vukelich, Han & Buell, 2014; Roskos & Neuman, 1993; Van Oers & Duijkers, 2012). Content presented within these interactions are a means of instruction, rather than an end goal in itself (Bodrova, 2008). Researchers from the EPPE study found that such an approach was effective in facilitating children’s learning in play-based settings (Siraj-Blatchford & Woodhead, 2009; Sylva et al., 2007).

**Play and learning.** However, despite the support for play as a pedagogical approach, there remains a lack of clarity in the literature on the exact relationship between play and learning in ECEC settings. Anning, Cullen and Fleer (2004) reported many discrepancies between educators’ stated beliefs and understandings of what play is and their pedagogical approaches to learning. Wood (2004) suggests that some of the confusion eventuates because play and learning are often kept separate in discussions in the literature about ECEC pedagogy. However, it was found that play and learning appeared together in the one term in some of the literature, such as play as learning (Johnston & Nahmad-Williams, 2009), play-based
learning (Thomas, Warren & deVries, 2011; Wood, 2004) or playing-learning child (Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2008). Some researchers claim that it is difficult to implement play to facilitate learning within the confines of a classroom, where there are time and space constraints (Bodrova, 2008; Stephen, 2010). Tannock (2011) remarks that play in the classroom setting rarely occurs in isolation, as play in itself. More often, it is part of other activities. Samuelsson and Carlsson (2008) posit that the differentiation lies in who initiates the activity; that is, play is initiated by the child while learning happens from practices initiated by an adult.

In the context of this lack of clarity about play and learning, play-based teaching and explicit teaching of content have tended to become positioned as opposing pedagogies in schools, with the latter being aligned with a pedagogy that enables more ‘formalised’ learning (Thomas, Warren & deVries, 2011). Researchers propose that ‘intentional teaching’, in which teachers act with specific outcomes and goals in mind (Epstein, 2007), can be incorporated to facilitate learning in both play settings and explicit teaching contexts (Epstein, 2007; Leggett & Ford, 2013). Various researchers claim that play, intentional teaching and explicit teaching of content can work together as pedagogical practices in facilitating the young child’s learning overall (Epstein, 2007; Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2008; Sylva et al., 2007; Thomas, Warren & deVries, 2011). For instance, Siraj-Blatchford and colleagues (Siraj-Blatchford & Woodhead, 2009; Sylva et al., 2007) found that children, who experienced a ‘balanced’ programme, which included explicit teaching of content, intentional teaching through adult-directed play and times for learning in child-directed play, were likely to experience success in later learning in the compulsory years. The researchers concluded that what made the difference in the child’s learning was not attributable to a specific pedagogy adopted in isolation.
Rather, it was educators adopting a range of pedagogical practices to meet the child’s needs (Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004; Siraj-Blatchford, Taggart, Sylva, Sammons & Melhuish, 2008; Siraj-Blatchford & Woodhead, 2009; Sylva et al., 2007).

**Play and literacy learning.** Emergent literacy theorists assert that oral language is a key component of literacy (Cambourne & Turbill, 2007; Crawford, 1995; Diaz, Arthur, Beecher & McNaught, 2000; Dickinson & McCabe, 2001; Makin, Hayden & Diaz, 2000; Morrow, 2009). Oral language is also a key component of, and facilitated through, play (Bodrova, 2008; Roskos & Neuman, 1993). Pellegrini and Galda (1993) claim that symbolic play, and the oral language that accompanies such play, is particularly powerful in facilitating the necessary representational and cognitive skills needed for children to develop written literacy skills. In a critical review of the research, Roskos and Christie (2001) concluded that a young child’s oral language, and their literacy learning, could be facilitated through play.

In support of this stance, various researchers reported how play settings provided opportunities for children to specifically use their oral language in ways that facilitated their literacy development (Hay & Fielding-Barnsley, 2012; Massey, 2013; Meacham, Vukelich, Han & Buell, 2014; Roskos & Neuman, 1993; Van Oers & Duijkers, 2012). For instance, in an ethnographic study, Roskos and Neuman (1993) demonstrated how teachers scaffolded children’s oral language development in play, so facilitating literacy learning. Massey (2013) and Hay and Fielding-Barnsley (2012), in separate studies, demonstrated how teacher scaffolding during storybook reading facilitated children’s literacy learning in a play-based setting.

However, Mills (2008) argues that educational policy focused on students’ achievements in literacy testing may result in more emphasis on explicit teaching of
literacy content to students in the ECEC years. This may reduce the emphasis on play (Krejsler, 2012), and possibly impact upon the child’s oral language, and literacy, learning. The next section reviews and critiques the literature on educational policy.

Educational Policy

After defining policy, this section critically reviews the research on educational policy.

**Policy as a process.** Up to the late twentieth century, policy was generally viewed as a set plan of action, created by people in authority, for those further down the line of management to simply implement and follow (Bascia, Cumming, Datnow, Leithwood & Livingstone, 2005). During the 1990s, Stephen Ball (1994, 1997) provided a significantly different definition which encapsulated policy as a process. Vidovich (2007) argues that Ball’s work has provided a turning point in how policy is defined and described within educational settings.

According to Ball, policy does not “tell you what to do but created the circumstances in which a range of options in deciding what to do is narrowed or changed” (Ball, 1997, p. 270). Accordingly, he claims that policy is more than a document alone; policies are “textual interventions to practice” (Ball, 1994, p. 18), describing “what is enacted as well as what is intended” (Ball, 1994, p. 10). Hence, ‘policy’ is a complex process that is always incomplete (Ball, 1994).

Various “contexts and values” (Maguire, Ball & Braun, 2010, p. 167), inherent in the policy itself (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010), and from the policy actors who encounter the policy, are brought together in the policy process (Maguire, Ball & Braun, 2010; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Policy is thus a value laden process (Maguire,
Ball & Braun, 2010; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Hence, policy functions as an ideology in itself (Levinson, Sutton & Winstead, 2009), as well as being informed by the ideology of policy actors (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). There is potential for conflict between competing values, interests and ideologies (Maguire, Ball & Braun, 2010; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). This can result in policy becoming “a practice of wielding power” (Levinson, Sutton & Winstead, 2009, p. 771) through which some policy actors, and their ideology, dominate over others and effectively change a system in their own vision and interests (Levinson, Sutton & Winstead, 2009). Researchers claim that less dominant policy actors, such as teachers, can also wield power of their own through adopting roles of resistance and/or undermining policy (Ball, Maguire, Braun & Hoskins, 2011; Luke, 2003).

Thus, within the frame of policy as a process, a policy “is always in the constant nexus of a new production through interpretation in practice” (Heimans, 2012b, p. 386) as policy actors make sense of (Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002), reinterprete, recontextualise (Braun, Maguire & Ball, 2010) and/or modify (Levinson, Sutton & Winstead, 2009) policy according to their needs. The term enactment, rather than production and implementation, is increasingly used in the literature to encapsulate these ongoing processes of policy reinterpretation and redefinition (Heimans, 2012a, 2012b; Maguire, Ball & Braun, 2010). Furthermore, Luke (2003), in describing the policy process as a “chaotic loop” (Luke, 2003, p. 58), highlights how policy is enacted in a cycle within and through global and local contexts (Ball, 1994). Thus, at any one time a policy represents “cannabalised products of multiple influences and agendas” (Ball, 1994, p. 16). (See Chapter Five for further description of the policy trajectory.)
Describing educational policy. Educational policy is any oral, written or visual texts aimed to “frame, constitute and change educational practices” (Lingard & Ozga, 2007, p. 2). In enacting educational policy in schools, teachers and leaders enact and embed policies from the broader policy contexts while simultaneously responding to local needs of their community (Braun, Maguire & Ball, 2010; Gerrard & Farrell, 2013; Perryman, Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2011). For example, Spencer, Falchi and Ghiso (2011), in their study of policy enactment in a school, found that the school leaders recontextualised numerous Departmental policies, in ways that met the demands of these policies, while still meeting the needs of their community.

Researchers argue that there are potentially myriad educational policies in schools emanating from numerous global, national and local contexts, with this creating a “policy soup” (Braun, Ball & Maguire, 2011, p. 581). As schools engage with these policies, leaders and teachers can sometimes have a sense of ‘messiness’ and/or policy overload (Ball, Maguire, Braun & Hoskins, 2011). School-based policies thus can become “composites – artful, sometimes awkward and ramshackle constructions” (Braun, Ball & Maguire, 2011, p. 581) as they represent “complex relationships between local, national and global contexts and agendas” (Gerrard & Farrell, 2013, p. 5). The analysis of policy processes in schools, as in this investigation, thus needs to investigate the local and global contexts in which schools are placed (Ball, 1994; Braun, Ball, Maguire & Hoskins, 2011).

Investigating the local context. Braun, Ball, Maguire and Hoskins (2011) developed an organisational frame that can be used to investigate and describe the local context of schools to reveal potentially impacting factors on school policy processes. It is a typology of four contextual dimensions. The first contextual dimension, labelled “situated” (Braun et al., 2011, p. 588), includes factors such as
the school’s history, intake and setting. The second contextual dimension, labelled “professional” (Braun et al., 2011, p. 588), considers aspects such as teachers’ experiences and qualifications. The third contextual dimension, named “material” (Braun et al., 2011, p. 588), includes factors such as staffing, budget and physical infrastructure. The final contextual dimension, labelled “external” (Braun et al., 2011, p. 588), identifies activities and policies from the broader policy contexts that are impacting on the school.

In their investigation of policy enactment in secondary schools in England, Braun, Ball, Maguire and Hoskins (2011) demonstrated that using the typology revealed influencing factors from the local context on school policy processes. Consequently, differences in policy processes between the schools were attributed to differences between the local settings. Keddie (2014) later found that using the typology helped to provide depth and richness to descriptions on how a school enacted a particular policy.

**Investigating the global context.** Researchers argue that analysis of the enactment of educational policy in schools should be positioned in the global context (Ball, 1994; Luke, 2003; Olssen, Codd & O’Neill, 2004). Within this global context, both globalisation and neoliberalism are identified by various researchers as major influences on educational policies (Apple, 2006, 2011; Clarke, 2012; Gibbon & Folke Henriksen, 2012; Lakes & Carter, 2011; Lupton, 2011; Olssen, 2004; Olssen, Codd & O’Neill, 2004; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Sellar & Lingard, 2013; Welch, 2010; Winter, 2012).

Rizvi and Lingard (2010) describe globalisation as the process by which the world has become interconnected from increased trade and cultural exchange, this being enabled through improvements in travel, communications and technology that
have compressed time and space in the world. Rizvi and Lingard (2010), together with Bagnall (2010), assert that the subsequent free flow of information, money, culture and people enabled through globalisation has blurred the borders of nation-states.

Connell (2013) defines neoliberalism as the “agenda of economic and social transformation under the sign of the free market” (Connell, 2013, p. 100). A neoliberal economy is thus characterised by privatisation, consumerism and free trade that emphasises managerialism, performance and accountability (Connell, 2013; Olssen, Codd & O’Neill, 2004). In a neoliberal economy, the individual becomes competitive and entrepreneurial and the state creates and maintains the conditions to enable the free market (Olssen, Codd & O’Neill, 2004).

Rizvi and Lingard (2010) argue that globalisation, together with the advancement of neoliberalism, has resulted in global commodification of services and goods, and this has included education. Various researchers assert that a given nation’s participation, and competitiveness, in this globalised, neoliberal-based knowledge economy consequently needs that nation to have suitably knowledgeable citizens; that is, human capital (Apple, 2006, 2011; Clarke, 2012; Connell, 2013; Gibbon & Folke Henriksen, 2012; Lakes & Carter, 2011; Lupton, 2011; Olssen, 2004; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Savage, 2011; Sellar & Lingard, 2013; Welch, 2010; Winter, 2012). Reflective of this competitive neoliberal ideology, education systems around the world have thus each become a “political project ... in relation to national competitiveness and the forces and discourses of globalisation” (Ball, Maguire, Braun, Perryman & Hoskins, 2012, p. 530), focused on producing the required human capital. This has made education central in the economic policy of these countries (Lingard, Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2013; Sellar
& Lingard, 2013). Neoliberal ideology, exemplified by discourses such as marketisation, competitiveness, comparisons, choice and managerialism, has thus come to underpin the educational policies of many nations (Connell, 2013; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Teodoro & Estrela, 2010; Welch, 2010; Youdell, 2004). This has lead to a “cascade of reforms” (Connell, 2013, p. 102) in schools; that is, neoliberal based educational policies has resulted in the emergence of market logic in schools so nations can produce citizens with the required knowledge and skills to maintain competitiveness in the global knowledge economy (Connell, 2013; Sahlberg, 2011). Sahlberg (2011) called this the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM), this being driven by policy which has resulted in ‘high-stakes’ testing linked to accountability, competition between schools and market mechanisms in schools.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is considered by researchers to be one of the main global actors influencing a nation’s educational policy towards these neoliberal competitive directions (Ball, Maguire, Braun, Perryman & Hoskins, 2012; Ozga & Lingard, 2007; Sellar & Lingard, 2013, 2014; Teodoro & Estrela, 2010; Yates & Young, 2010). Sellar and Lingard (2013) argue that, through activities which assess the performance of nation’s educational systems, the OECD is consequently shaping national governments’ understanding of educational systems they must create to provide the human capital necessary for their nation to enhance international competitiveness, and sustain economic growth. These activities provide countries, including Australia, with information and comparative data on various aspects of educational programmes. For instance, literacy is one aspect assessed in the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). The OECD also reports on ECEC programmes of various countries (see Chapter Two).
To enhance competitiveness in the global knowledge economy, nations use educational policy to implement national testing regimes and enforce accountability through performance goals that schools must meet (Gerrard & Farrell, 2013; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Ozga, 2009; Teodoro & Estrela, 2010). Through these mechanisms embedded in educational policy, governments are enabled in ‘steering at a distance’ schools according to their vision of international competitiveness (Lingard, Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2013; Ozga, 2009; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Researchers claim that these accountability regimes, which delegate responsibility for the school’s success to the school itself (Youdell, 2004), subsequently make evaluation a dominant value in school policy (Lingard, Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2013; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Various researchers assert that this is educational ‘policy as numbers’ (Lingard, 2011; Lingard, Creagh & Vass, 2012; Lingard, Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2013; Ozga, 2009; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

As schools enact such neoliberal based educational policies, in the pursuit of competitiveness, they manage and use a significant amount of data (Lingard, Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2013; Ozga, 2009). Some of this data is publicly available and can be used by parents to inform their school choices (Connell & Dados, 2014; Youdell, 2004). Researchers argue that parental choice discourse (Connell & Dados, 2014; Youdell, 2004), together with policy technologies embedded within the policies themselves, such as target setting, performance trajectories, tracking and performance management (Maguire, Perryman, Ball, & Braun, 2011; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010), reinforce the push for schools to improve test results. As schools work to meet the accountability demands of such policies, and to maintain their competitiveness in the market, some researchers claim a performance, or audit, culture is emerging in schools (Ball, 2000, 2003; Gleeson & Husbands, 2003). This
reflects an emerging global meta-narrative of “schooling as performances” (Ball, Maguire, Braun, Perryman & Hoskins, 2012, p. 515).

Ball and his colleagues assert that the resultant ‘high stakes’ performativity culture in schools, which eventuates from the enactment of neoliberal based educational policies, effects change in the work of teachers to a “technical professionalism” (Ball, Maguire, Braun, Perryman & Hoskins, 2012, p. 523); that is, the use of scientific, ‘technical’ data is emphasised over the use of teacher judgements to measure student progress. Teachers become increasingly focused on delivering improvements in school performances towards systemic, and institutional, targets in that, and later, years (Ball et al., 2012) to ensure their, and their students’, performances are in keeping with that demanded of policy (Ball & Olmedo, 2013). Some researchers claim that ‘educational triage’ (Gillborn & Youdell, 2000) is subsequently occurring in schools (Ball et al., 2012; Youdell, 2004) whereby students are sorted, and curricula adapted, according to perceived attainment in ‘high stakes’ tests. As teachers strive to constantly achieve, and demonstrate, progress, their work continues to be focused on, and driven by, the data (Ball, 2003; Ball & Olmedo, 2013).

**Equity and quality in educational policy.** Researchers argue that educational policy, which is underpinned by neoliberal values, is using equity and quality as part of persuasive rationales (Lingard, 2010; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Savage, 2011) for the pursuit of competitiveness, subsequently positioning these discourses within neoliberal terms. This is contributing to recasting education from being a social good to one of political and economic concern (Mosen-Lowe, Vidovich & Chapman, 2009).
Olssen, Codd and O’Neill (2004) assert that, in neoliberal based educational policy, quality becomes a metaphor for managerial control. In the pursuit of ‘quality’, schools subsequently engage in managerial processes as demanded through policy, such as objective setting, planning and internal monitoring (Olssen, Codd & O’Neill, 2004). Hence, Moss, Dahlberg and Pence (2013) claim that ‘quality’, in neoliberal based educational policy, is being reduced to measurable and reportable key performance indicators and equated with achieving excellence against these.

Researchers argue that equity in educational policy, that is underpinned by neoliberal values, is predominantly positioned as a numerical measure of performance (Lingard, 2011; Lingard, Sellar & Savage, 2014). Ball and Vincent (2005) argue that, although equity incorporates social justice, inclusion and fairness, educational policy that is based upon neoliberal values do not account for these aspects of equity. Furthermore, Thrupp and Tomlinson (2005) assert that a neoliberal based educational policy focus on testing results can adversely impact equity in ways that create social exclusion and minimise social justice.

Savage (2011) observes that the OECD positions equity and excellence, or quality, as operating harmoniously within the neoliberal based education market system. However, Savage queries how this could really be so in a system that ultimately stratifies individuals against performance indicators. Savage (2011), as well as Proctor and Sriprakash (2013), contend that equity, in terms of social justice, inclusion and fairness, can become marginalised in the pursuit of quality, or excellence in high testing results, in response to market demands. Furthermore, Proctor and Sriprakash (2013) reported on how the subsequent public availability of these test results enabled parental choice discourse (Connell & Dados, 2014; Youdell, 2004), and resulted in a form of ‘educational triage’ (Gillborn & Youdell,
2000) in some schools; that is, schools were found to be placing more emphasis on high-performing students in their programmes over low-performing students. High-performing students potentially enhance results, improve the school’s reputation and attract more high-performing students, and funding, for the school. Proctor and Sriprakash (2013) concluded that consequently, some schools will continue to do extremely well, while others will be left behind.

Thus, a critical review of the literature found that educational policy in nations around the world is being impacted upon by the forces of neoliberalism and globalisation. Part Two below contextualises these issues, along with those issues revealed in the critical review of research on literacy and ECEC outlined above, in a review and critique of the research in relation to educational policy, literacy and ECEC.

**Part Two: Literacy, ECEC and Educational Policy**

Part Two critically reviews the literature that brings together the key concepts underpinning this study, namely literacy, ECEC and educational policy.

**Literacy in Educational Policy**

Researchers argue that the literacy levels of a nation’s citizens, presented as ‘rates’, or scores, in international surveys and reports, have become indicators of that nation’s progress in terms of international competitiveness and economic prosperity in today’s globalised and neoliberal world (Bartlett, 2008; Chen & Derewianka, 2009; Diaz & Makin, 2002; Dreher, 2012; Freebody & Wyatt-Smith, 2004; Gee, 2012). Researchers assert that this has subsequently positioned literacy learning as a ‘cornerstone’ of the endeavour to produce citizens who can compete in this global knowledge economy, and enhance the nation’s international competitiveness.
Consequently, literacy has become embedded in a nation’s economic agenda (Comber & Nixon, 2009), with literacy testing and accountability regimes central components of a nation’s educational policies (Gerrard & Farrell, 2013; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Teodoro & Estrela, 2010). In Australia, the National Assessment Program-Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and the MySchool website (https://www.myschool.edu.au/) constitute a national literacy (and numeracy) testing regime instigated through national educational policy (see Chapter Two).

Researchers assert that this national testing regime is enabling Australian policy makers to monitor competitiveness of schools nationwide and, ultimately, Australia’s international competitiveness (Chen & Derewianka, 2009; Comber & Nixon, 2009; Dreher, 2012).

Various international and Australian researchers contend that, in a policy environment that emphasises test results in literacy, what is being abstracted from and tested in mandatory testing regimes is in tension with definitions of literacy in the literature and adversely impacts upon curricula in schools (Au, 2011; Berliner, 2011; Comber, 2011, 2012; Comber & Nixon, 2009; Connell, 2013; Kerkham & Nixon, 2014; Paugh, Carey, King-Jackson & Russell, 2007; Polesel, Rice & Dulfer, 2014; Urbach, 2012). For instance, in a review of research within America, Berliner (2011) reported that literacy testing and accountability regimes in that country were narrowing the literacy curriculum to what is being assessed. Consequently, Berliner concluded that literacy skills needed for functioning in today’s globalised and technologised world were not being taught. Au (2011) similarly found that ‘high stakes’ standardised testing regimes in America were producing standardised teaching and curricula control; that is, teachers were shaping the curriculum to match
what was being tested, tested subjects dominated and non-tested subjects were being edged out of the curriculum in schools.

In the Australian context, Comber and Nixon (2009) assert that Australian educational policies, centred on NAPLAN as they are, are exerting power over teachers to emphasise teaching to yield improved NAPLAN results. Later, Comber (2011) concludes that what ‘counts’ as literacy, and how it is being taught in Australian schools, is consequently being determined more by testing regimes, rather than the literature. In providing further support for her stance, Comber (2012) reported on a case study of a school in Australia where, in response to educational policy that emphasised results in NAPLAN, teachers were adapting their literacy teaching in the months leading up to these tests to ‘teaching to the test’, with this effectively narrowing the literacy curriculum. Kostogriz and Doecke (2013) claim literacy teaching in Australia is subsequently being reduced to quantifiable dimensions. Klenowski and Wyatt-Smith (2012) reported similarly from interviews with Australian school principals. Furthermore, Polesel, Rice and Dulfer (2014) found that literacy teaching focused on achieving improved NAPLAN results was reducing the time spent on non-tested curriculum areas. Luke (2012) argues that the Australian educational policy emphasis on test results is not leading to teaching that will, in his opinion, improve the results. He calls for a return to teaching practices that are more aligned with the literature rather than what is tested.

Au (2011) found that the focus on testing in America was deskillng teachers in their literacy teaching, as teachers increasingly emphasised teaching assessable aspects of literacy in deference to other aspects. In Australia, Comber (2012) reported that teachers’ literacy teaching was becoming intensified around achieving improved testing performances. Cormack and Comber (2013) reported that
Australian educators subsequently expressed doubts in their professional judgements on the literacy learning of their students, in an environment in which test performances were receiving more of an emphasis. According to Thompson and Cook (2014), the testing regimes are changing what it means to be a ‘good teacher’; that is, to someone who produces the results.

The Australian Federal Government has instigated NAPLAN and, through Australian Federal Government funded organisations, collects, analyses and reports on NAPLAN. Furthermore, Lingard (2011) reported that various Federal-State ‘partnerships’ provided States and Territories, and schools, with reward payments for improved results (see Chapter Two). He, together with Welch (2010), argue that these financial arrangements accord the Australian Federal Government with a degree of power and control over Australian education, in a country in which States and Territories traditionally hold the constitutional powers in educational governance. Researchers claim that these actions of the Australian Federal Government are contributing to the creation of a national system of schooling in Australia (Lingard, 2010, 2011; Lingard & Sellar, 2013; Rizvi & Lingard, 2011; Welch, 2010). Furthermore, some researchers identify ‘national’ as a major value underpinning Australian educational policy (Rizvi & Lingard, 2011), this reflecting an underlying discourse of federalism (Pitman, 2012). Lingard and Sellar (2013) subsequently suggest that it may prove difficult for schools to lessen the focus on NAPLAN, when NAPLAN is linked with funding arrangements for schools.

Kostogriz and Doecke (2013) found tensions for Australian teachers as teachers struggled with reconciling policy mandates for improved results in literacy with their personal sense of professionalism. Hardy (2013) also found similar tensions. He suggests that the struggles Australian teachers are facing, in responding
to the demands of such educational policies, need to be analysed and understood in terms of these tensions. This, he asserts, needs further research into literacy policy processes at the school level in Australia. Thus, this study was primarily focused on investigating school literacy policy processes in an Australian context.

**ECEC in Educational Policy**

Researchers argue that quality ECEC is being positioned through educational policies, which emphasise test results, as a good investment for governments; that is, it yields economic and social gains (Logan, Press & Sumsion, 2012; Moss, 2013, 2014). Krejsler (2012) asserts that providing quality ECEC is thus seen as foundational to ensuring a country’s competitiveness in the global knowledge economy. In essence, quality ECEC achieves this as it is viewed as establishing in young children the skills needed to succeed in testing regimes in later years (Ball & Vincent, 2005; Brown & Pickard, 2014).

Researchers claim that educational policies that emphasise test results are increasing pressure to explicitly teach content to children in ECEC to ensure these students’ success in testing during these, and later, years of schooling (Bennett, 2013; Brown, 2013; Brown & Pickard, 2014; Cochran, 2011; Mills, 2008; Moss, 2013; Polesel, Rice & Dulfer, 2014). Some researchers argue that this is also indicative of young children being ‘readied for school’ (Bradbury, 2013; Brown, 2013; Brown & Pickard, 2014; Moss, 2013); that is, prepared for academic learning. Brown (2013) argues that the concept of school readiness in ECEC should be broader than a focus on teachable, academic skills. It also needs to address other factors such as family support and resourcing of the programmes.
Bodrova (2008) comments that a focus on academic content, such as explicit literacy skills and knowledge, reflects a perception that teaching underlying academic skills for later learning early will prevent children from ‘falling behind’. Krejsler (2012) posits that this is creating less emphasis on traditional play-based pedagogy in ECEC in favour of formal learning to teach the required content. Bradbury (2011, 2013, 2014) investigated a mandatory testing regime that is implemented over a year in Reception in England when children turn five years of age. Bradbury (2013) argues that these testing practices effectively disadvantage those children coming into this school-based ECEC setting without the necessary prior-to-school experiences considered necessary for success in this testing; that is, their sociocultural backgrounds differ to that required for the testing. She posits that these children, who have not had the necessary prior-to-school experiences, are subsequently being excluded from later learning through their ‘failure’ in these tests. Bradbury (2013) asserts that the testing regime is producing inequality for children and effecting change in the concept of the ‘ideal learner’ in this ECEC setting.

Researchers claim that ECEC teachers, as a consequence of enacting educational policies focused upon test results, are thus faced with many professional challenges as they work to reconcile the assessment demands of these policies with their conceptions and practice of ECEC curriculum and pedagogy to which they subscribe (Bradbury, 2012, 2013; Brown, 2009, 2013; Fenech & Sumsion, 2007; Moss, 2013; Osgood, 2006; Soler & Miller, 2003). Overton (2009) comments that ECEC teachers are experiencing disempowerment; that is, feeling unable to counteract perceived negative impacts. To counter this sense of disempowerment, Fenech and Sumsion (2007) suggest that educators within ECEC exercise agency and reflection and contest what they see as constraining features of such educational
policies. Brown (2013) advocates that reflection in this way by ECEC teachers can enact reform that meets the demands of policy but maintains “the complexity of the child and of the field of early childhood education” (Brown, 2013, p. 570).

**Literacy, ECEC and Educational Policy in Australia**

Two national curricula have been produced in Australia (see Chapter Two), these being the *Australian Curriculum: Version 2.0* (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2011a) and *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace [DEEWR] for the Council of Australian Governments [COAG], 2009). Both of these explicitly position literacy as foundational to learning, with this learning to begin in the early years. As outlined above, various researchers argue that literacy skills and quality ECEC are both foundational and essential for students’ later learning in school, and life.

Research reviewed above highlights how educational policies, which are focused upon test results, are impacting upon both literacy and ECEC. Much of the research that has been conducted in Australian schools in regard to literacy has focused upon the ‘NAPLAN years’; that is, Years Three, Five, Seven and Nine of school. There was minimal research that has been conducted in Australian schools that offers insight into the production and enactment of school literacy policy prior to the NAPLAN years, specifically relevant to the ECEC years of school. Thus, this study aimed to investigate the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on ECEC teachers, to explore whether the intent of the policy elite at national and State levels was being put into practice and enacted by those in schools expected to implement the policy.
Conclusion

Part One of this chapter reviewed and critiqued the literature on the key concepts central to this investigation, namely literacy, ECEC and educational policy. Each of these concepts was found to be multifaceted in the literature. Literacy was revealed to be a rich and complex construct, the teaching of which can raise issues of equity. There was much contention and debate found in the literature in regards to the field of ECEC. Educational policy was found to be a complex process that is impacted upon by the forces of globalisation and neoliberalism in nations around the world, including Australia.

Part Two drew the central concepts together. It reviewed and critiqued the research, including those based within Australia, on the impact of educational policy, which is focused on test results, on literacy and ECEC. There was found minimal research that investigated the production and enactment of school literacy policy in Australia, specifically relevant to the ECEC years of school.

Hence, this study was aimed to investigate the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on ECEC teachers. In doing so, this study focused on how literacy education in ECEC was being positioned in the Australian educational policy landscape. The primary focus of the study was on policy processes at the school level. It used a policy trajectory approach and, within this, a typology of contextual dimensions to reveal possible factors inherent within the local context that is impacting upon school policy processes.

Before describing the methodology used in this study, the next chapter presents the theoretical framings.
Chapter Four

Theoretical Framework

Introduction
The previous chapter critiqued the literature relevant to the key concepts embedded within this investigation into the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on early childhood education and care (ECEC) teachers. This chapter details the theoretical underpinnings for this investigation, these being interpretivism and critical theory.

The chapter begins by exploring the underlying assumptions of interpretivism. After critiquing and demonstrating how interpretivism is applicable in policy studies, such as this one, the chapter progresses in a similar fashion with regards to critical theory. The chapter concludes by discussing the complementary role each played at different points of the analysis process in this study.

Interpretivism
Through interpretivism, the researcher is enabled in studying the realities that individuals face, work, live in and create meaning from (O’Donoghue, 2007) as they experience and negotiate their world (Scott & Morrison, 2006). Research that is framed by interpretivism collects and analyses data to uncover layers of meaning being made by participants living the experiences under investigation (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The aim is to reach an understanding of individual participant’s perspectives of the experience (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; O’Donoghue, 2007). Accordingly, studies that adopt the interpretivist paradigm present rich descriptions of the meanings constructed by individuals.
during, and as a result of, their experiences (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010; Punch, 2005; Silverman, 2010).

The field of interpretivism is not homogenous (O’Donoghue, 2007). It encompasses a variety of styles (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010) that represent different conceptual bases (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005), each with slightly different centres of focus in an investigation. To exemplify this diversity, two styles are detailed below, namely phenomenology and ethnomethodology.

In phenomenology, a field often associated with the work of Husserl (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005; O’Donoghue, 2007), the researcher focuses on gaining an understanding of the meaning being constructed by individuals in relation to specific phenomena encountered in their everyday world (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010; Crotty, 2009). Researchers who adopt phenomenology allow the meanings to be constructed by, and emerge from, the individuals themselves to gain an understanding of the individual’s perspectives from, and within, their reality as it is lived by them (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010; Crotty, 2009; Laverty, 2003). In order to achieve this, the researcher brackets, or puts to one side, their own perspectives and values (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005) to see “the world afresh” (Crotty, 2009, p. 86). Bracketing thus enables researchers to discover, through participants’ eyes, how the phenomenon appears to, and is experienced directly by, participants rather than through other structures and lenses that are tainted by the researcher’s own values and beliefs systems (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010; Crotty, 2009; Laverty, 2003).

Ethnomethodology, pioneered by Howard Garfinkel, is another style within the interpretivist paradigm (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010). It is “the study of people’s methods of constructing reality” (Silverman, 2010, p. 106). The conceptual
basis and scope of ethnomethodology is broader than phenomenology.

Phenomenology focuses on specific phenomena being experienced by the individual, while ethnomethodology focuses on how “members actually do social life” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005, p. 486) and how they “construct and sustain social entities, such as gender” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005, p. 486). In exploring social entities as they occur in everyday life, an ethnomethodological lens enables the researcher to investigate how norms, cultural beliefs and practices that underpin these social entities are developed, maintained or changed (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010; Punch, 2005; Silverman, 2010).

Within ethnomethodology, there are two sub-groups, with each representing slightly different views and different methods of focus in uncovering the workings of social entities (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010; Holstein & Gubrium, 2005). Linguistic ethnomethodologists explore how language is structured and used to construct, make sense of and conduct everyday life within the bounds of social entities (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010). Using this approach, researchers closely examine individuals’ talk, often undertaking and presenting versions of conversational analysis, to determine how the talk itself constructs and reflects the reality of the social entity as it is experienced by the individuals (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005). Situational ethnomethodologists broaden the scope and consider how people negotiate, make sense of and order the social contexts and their environment in which they live, within the bounds of social entities (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010). Researchers who employ situational ethnomethodology see place as “mediating the meaning of what is said” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005, p. 488) and thus include detailed descriptions of place settings in their analyses and reports. Holstein and Gubrium (2005) propose that these two sub-groups can be
unified by bringing together analysis of talk within the frame of place and social contexts, so providing an even richer description of the individual’s perspectives of the experiences under study.

Thus, the field of interpretivism is diverse and dynamic, as concepts and styles evolve, segregate and sometimes hybridise in accordance with research aims and goals. However, central to interpretivism remains the goal to explore and expose the meaning of an experience from the individual’s perspective within the reality in which those individuals live (O’Donoghue, 2007). Within the interpretivist paradigm, reality itself is a social construct (Harlos, Mallon, Stablein & Jones, 2003), created by individuals as they interact in, and make meaning from, their social world (Scott & Morrison, 2006). The resultant ‘truth’, or reported reality of an individual’s experience, is linked with the particular meanings that each individual has constructed from their experience (Macdonald, Kirk, Metzler, Nilges, Schempp & Wright, 2002). Potentially, each individual has a different experience and creates and reports a different ‘truth’; that is, a different reality in comparison to another. Thus, in interpretivism, there is no one reality, no one truth of the experience (Christians, 2005). Rather, it is truth, and a version of reality, from an individual’s perspective. As each individual will have different perspectives, and different truths, to another, interpretivism allows the expression of multiple realities through the voices of the different individuals (Bucci, 2002). Through adopting an interpretivist paradigm, the researcher exposes the meaning of these different realities constructed and held by the individuals within the scope of the study (Harlos et al., 2003).

While interpretivism identifies the existence of multiple realities, and truths, of an experience from the perspectives of individuals (Bucci, 2002; Christians, 2005), there is also acknowledgement within interpretivism of the creation of some
collective meaning making by individuals within an experience (Macdonald, Kirk, Metzler, Nilges, Schempp & Wright, 2002). Holstein and Gubrium (2005) thus suggest that researchers who adopt interpretivism explore, and particularly look at, the interplay between the meaning made and the “artful processes and substantive conditions” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005, p. 494) that mediate and affect what meanings are made. These ‘conditions’ encompass the social, historical and cultural contexts of the interaction itself (Christians, 2005; Crotty, 2009; O’Donoghue, 2007), as well as the meanings and knowledge base people have already (Vidovich & O’Donoghue, 2003a, 2003b). While such bases differ between individuals, there is potential for individuals to share some social, historical and cultural knowledge (Christians, 2005; Crotty, 2009; O’Donoghue, 2007). This intersubjectivity (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005) facilitates the process by which all participants experience some ‘sameness’ to the reality associated with the experience; that is, it explains the construction of collective, common meanings from the interaction (Macdonald et al., 2002).

The interpretivist paradigm thus allows the researcher to identify the sequence and significance of a particular experience from the individual’s perspective (Macdonald, Kirk, Metzler, Nilges, Schempp & Wright, 2002), uncovering how participants see and do things as well as what meanings are being generated (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005). Consequently, interpretivism allows research to present individuals’ perspectives and voices (Christians, 2005) and enables researchers to understand processes and the ‘now’ of the reality as experienced by the participants (O’Donoghue, 2007).

Policy is a dynamic process (Ball, 1994, 1997) in which human agency is a key feature (Vidovich & O’Donoghue, 2003a). Humans at all levels of policy
construction and enactment meld circumstances, options and goals in complex and sophisticated ways (Maguire, Ball & Braun, 2010; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) within a constant loop that flows backwards and forwards across the policy sites (Ball, 1994, 1997; Luke, 2003). Each policy actor brings their individual background knowledge and experiences to make sense of (Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002) and appropriate (Levinson, Sutton & Winstead, 2009) the policy at whatever level or site they experience the policy process.

Through the interpretivist lens, the researcher can get a glimpse of the “sense-making” (Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002, p. 388) of policy from the perspective of the individual. It enables data analysis procedures to examine, and focus on, the everyday practices of policy actors as they live and work in the setting in which policy processes occur (Christians, 2005; O’Donoghue, 2007). The interpretivist lens maintains the focus of the research on the interactions with, and meaning individuals make of, policy (Scott & Morrison, 2006). It allows the researcher to gain an understanding of this subjective world of experience (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010) from the perspective of these individual policy actors (Scott & Morrison, 2006), so exposing the multiple voices and realities of individuals (Bucci, 2002; Christians, 2005) as they engage in policy processes.

However, there are two areas of critique to be considered about interpretivism relevant to this study. The first is in relation to the lack of ability of the interpretivist paradigm to consider power relationships. The second issue is the relative disregard by interpretivism of the context in which the participant is placed. These areas are each further explicated below.

The processes of making meaning, and the knowledge produced, are not neutral or free of values (Crotty, 2009; Scott & Morrison, 2006). The knowledge and
meaning that is constructed potentially represents power relationships between the interests of some groups over others within that context (Crotty, 2009; Scott & Morrison, 2006). The interpretivist approach underplays the influence of these power relationships – relationships that researchers argue have an effect on humans’ behaviour, the events that occur, the knowledge produced and the meanings made (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010; Scott & Morrison, 2006).

Researchers in the area of policy analysis argue for the existence and impact of these power relationships in policy processes. For instance, Ball and his colleagues (Ball, Maguire, Braun & Hoskins, 2011; Maguire, Ball & Braun, 2010) contend that policy enactment is full of contestation and negotiation between various groups, some of whom hold more power in comparison to others. Similarly, Levinson, Sutton and Winstead (2009) argue that policy is “a practice of wielding power” (Levinson, Sutton & Winstead, 2009 p. 771). Interpretivism can expose the individual’s understanding of their experiences of policy and, in the process, make the individual aware of alternative constructions of meaning and alternative ways of constructing their social world (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005). However, the interpretivist lens alone does not allow for making explicit the values and belief systems of groups and exploring, and exposing, the power relationships between and within groups (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010; Scott & Morrison, 2006).

Furthermore, to facilitate a fuller understanding of the policy process under investigation, this study considered the impact of local contextual factors on policy processes, using a typology of contextual dimensions provided by Braun, Ball, Maguire and Hoskins (2011). The interpretivist paradigm recognises the existence of context, as part of the interaction in which meaning is made (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005), but does not make explicit the impact of factors within the context on
meaning made when analysing and examining an individual’s perspectives of the experience (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010; Scott & Morrison, 2006).

The interpretivist paradigm, if adopted in isolation in policy analysis, can thus reveal the individual’s perspectives (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010). However, this potentially creates an incomplete picture of the social reality of policy processes as interpretivism does not allow for the analysis of, or presentation of findings on, how context and power relationships impact upon this policy process. An additional theoretical paradigm was adopted in this study, namely critical theory, to enable a fuller picture to be revealed of the complexities of policy processes under investigation.

**Critical Theory**

Critical theory has its foundations within the philosophy of Karl Marx (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010; Crotty, 2009; Hammersley, 2005). Marx saw the proletariat, or the working class, as being the oppressed and argued for the emancipation of the proletariat. However, rather than substitute itself as the dominant group of the society, Marx argued that the proletariat should work towards destroying social injustices inherent in the social system and establish equality within that social system (Crotty, 2009).

The Frankfurt School, which originated in Germany in the 1920s, and whose key researchers include Horkheimer, Adorno and Pollock (Bonner, 2002; Crotty, 2009; Hammersley, 1997; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005), drew from the writings of Marx and identified “ideology critique” (Hammersley, 1997, p. 240) as the primary task of critical theory. This aims to reveal society’s underlying assumptions, these being taken-for-granted values and accepted ways of behaving and thinking, to
expose the power relationships and empower others to take action towards creating a non-oppressive society (Hammersley, 1997). The Frankfurt School experienced a turbulent history. It was exiled to America during the 1940s and experienced many ‘in-house’ disagreements (Bonner, 2002; Crotty, 2009; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). However, the turbulence resulted in the emergence of a broad and diverse critical theory (Bonner, 2002; Crotty, 2009).

Thus, the critical theory paradigm represents no one theoretical stance (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). It does not prescribe a single system or a fixed set of descriptors, being a fluid field that is full of contestation and negotiation (Bonner, 2002). As critical theorists respond to an evolving and dynamic society, in which relationships of power and oppression change, new theories and methodologies are developed to explain and uncover these relationships (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). “Hybridity is endemic” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 305) to critical theory, to the extent that, at times, critical theory seems to intermix with other research paradigms. For instance, writers such as Hammersley (2005) and Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) reported blurring between critical theory and other research paradigms, such as feminism and post-modernism.

Central to critical theory remains recognition of the existence within society of dominant groups holding power over oppressed minority groups (Bonner, 2002; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005; Scott & Morrison, 2006). Research taking a critical theory stance aims to expose these power relationships and empower the minority groups to take action that is necessary to eradicate oppression and emancipate people towards a more equal and just society (Bonner, 2002; Crotty, 2009; Hammersley, 1997; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005; Scott & Morrison, 2006; Wodak, 2001).
The making of meaning and the creation of knowledge are inextricably linked with the power of certain groups and individuals over others (Bonner, 2002; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). Similar to interpretivism, such as described by Holstein and Gubrium (2005), critical theory consider that all participants in an interaction come to that interaction with previous knowledge, beliefs, values and rules of behaving and thinking developed from previous interactions (Bonner, 2002; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). However, where critical theory departs from interpretivism is its contention that, within a given context, some groups, and individual participants who represent these groups, seem to hold more power over others, have greater standing in relation to others; that is, the knowledge these individuals within these groups bring to the context seems to take precedence over that of others (Bonner, 2002; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). The meaning that is made and the knowledge constructed within, and from, a given interaction thus cannot be considered value free or neutral (Bonner, 2002; Crotty, 2009; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005; Scott & Morrison, 2006).

Over time, the knowledge and facts representing the views and values of the powerful groups become, or continue to be, privileged or dominant over others (Bonner, 2002; Bucci, 2002; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005; Scott & Morrison, 2006). Thus, to the critical theorist, the shared assumptions, and intersubjectivity, inherent in a given interaction, as identified by the interpretivist paradigm (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005), represents this dominant knowledge base of the powerful, prevailing group. Furthermore, individuals may feel obliged to comply with the prevailing group, and its dominant knowledge base, because of the power relationships inherent in the interaction (Bucci, 2002). This one dominant construction of reality and knowledge perpetuates a status quo, and an inequality that
sees continued oppression of minority groups, whose knowledge is under-represented and unknown and who may accept their standing as natural, inevitable and necessary for society to continue (Bucci, 2002). This hegemony, or dominance of values of one group over others that is perceived as acceptable or the norm, is a central concept of critical theory (Bonner, 2002; Bucci, 2002; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). It explicates how the status quo of a social system, and the power relationships inherent within it, exist and are maintained (Bonner, 2002; Bucci, 2002; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). In this way, knowledge is produced in this social system within a framework of assumptions that are steeped in cultural complexities (Christians, 2005; Crotty, 2009; Hammersley, 2005). These encompass, and are reflective of, the power plays between the dominant and minority groups (Bonner, 2002; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005; Scott & Morrison, 2006). Researchers within the critical theory paradigm aim to explore and expose hegemony, and the inherent power relationships.

Critical theory unifies theory with practice (Hammersley, 1997; Wodak, 2001). Individuals, who come to understand their situation and the forces of power, can take control, feel empowered and enact social change to destabilise the status quo and redress power imbalances within, and between, interactive groups towards egalitarian social systems (Bonner, 2002; Bucci, 2002; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010; Crotty, 2009; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Hammersley, 1997, 2005; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). Critical theorists thus give voice to, and emancipate, the marginalised (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010) and foster democracy (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Scott & Morrison, 2006) within social contexts.

As the term ‘critical theory’ does not represent a prescriptive set of descriptors, so critical theory dictates no one set methodology or analysis process.
Kincheloe and McLaren (2005), in their presentation and discussion of a reconceptualised view of critical theory, recognise this lack of prescription as being a defining characteristic of critical theory itself. They argue this enables critical theory to remain responsive to the changing power relationships and oppression in a dynamic and evolving society. Instead of trying to prescribe procedures, Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) propose a “rolling commonality” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 304) of general phases and issues for researchers to consider when applying the critical theory paradigm.

For instance, Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) advise that the critical theorist engage in a phase of analysis they term “critical enlightenment” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 307). In this, the critical theory researcher analyses the data for competing interests between groups and individuals, so exposing the processes by which these power plays operate and are sustained in order to discover “who gains and who loses” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 307). During another phase of “critical emancipation” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 308), the researcher uses the data to identify forces that are preventing the emancipation of the oppressed and this supports the oppressed group to seek to gain, or regain, power. In explaining some of the processes and factors that create and sustain oppression, Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) highlight the role of economics but do not see economic factors in isolation as being all powerful. Instead, in rejecting “economic determinism” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 308) within the critical theory paradigm, economic factors are viewed as being inseparable to other axes of oppression, such as race or gender (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005).

Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) warn against “instrumental or technical rationality” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 308) in which researchers become so
concerned with procedures, technique and method in analysis framed by critical theory that researchers can “forget the humanistic purpose of the research act” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 308). Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) argue that this can become one of the most oppressive forces in itself, so restricting the empowerment of individuals to enact change. To keep uppermost the purpose of the research act in critical theory, this being to uncover the issues of power and oppression within the data, Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) thus suggest that researchers weave available tools together in an eclectic fashion through what is termed “bricolage” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 316).

A researcher who takes a critical theory stance presents their work itself as a form of social criticism (Hammersley, 2005; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005) and a critique of ideology in order to promote social change (Scott & Morrison, 2006). Within the critical theory paradigm, the research becomes a revolutionary, political and emancipatory system (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005) in which immanence is balanced with transcendence and transformation (Bonner, 2002). Critical theorists are not only concerned with who we are and how we got here but, importantly, also where we go to from here (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). Researchers thus engage in praxis, this being action informed by reflection during the research process, with the aim of empowering and emancipating minority groups (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010). However, reflection is not all on the part of the researcher. Crotty (2009) contends that minority groups must also engage in reflective participation to raise awareness and consciousness about their oppression. This can be achieved through researchers employing a methodology that is problem posing and dialogic with the minority groups (Crotty, 2009).
Critical theory is not without its criticisms. The link between the processes and product of ideology critique with the emancipation of the minority group is not clear and has not been proven (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010). Some question how uncovering the issues of power will empower the oppressed in the way that critical theorists envision and whether such an aim is arrogant, over-ambitious and idealistic on the part of the researcher; that is, no one is ever completely freed of oppression (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005).

The consequence of the process of ideology critique inherent in critical theory is that the research itself develops a deliberate political agenda (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010). Researchers may be reluctant to adopt such an agenda, adhering to the view that research should essentially be about the pursuit of knowledge rather than taking a political stance (Hammersley, 2005). In critical theory, values and belief systems of all involved in the research become a central feature, including that of the researcher. Consequently, as their own belief systems become implicated in the research design and process, researchers may be unable to take a disinterested stance on the interpretation and conclusions drawn from the data (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005; Scott & Morrison, 2006). This goes contrary to the view that researchers should remain dispassionate, disinterested and objective (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010). Critical theory, by its very nature, does not dictate objectivity but this can be its strength, as it permits researchers to explore and uncover the values and beliefs that contribute to the power relationships and oppression (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005).

Policy is used to direct the actions of people in a desired way (Ball, 1994, 1997). Policy processes are thus full of contestation and negotiation between competing interests and values at all levels of the policy process, with some values
and interests dominating over others (Ball, Maguire, Braun & Hoskins, 2011; Levinson, Sutton & Winstead, 2009; Maguire, Ball & Braun, 2010; Ozga, 2000; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

Ozga (2000) identifies three implications for the use of critical theory in policy research, making it applicable as a theoretical paradigm in policy studies. Firstly, Ozga (2000) contends that critical theory allows the researcher to analyse the data to challenge any dominant agendas, values and assumptions inherent in policy processes. Secondly, Ozga (2000) argues that it permits the researcher to investigate and expose how the power relationships and inequalities within policy processes are produced, reproduced and sustained. The researcher can examine how, and where, policy processes increase inequality and impact unfairly on particular groups, so raising awareness of policy actors on this. Finally, Ozga (2000) asserts that critical theory allows for the identification of ways in which policy actors can be empowered to work for change towards the eradication of oppression of minority groups, and more egalitarian policy processes. In this way, critical theory enables the researcher to develop evaluations of policy that contribute to democracy (Ozga, 2000).

A critical theory lens was thus adopted in this study as it allowed the uncovering of how power relationships shaped policy (Crotty, 2009) across many levels and sites of the policy processes under investigation. It enabled the researcher to interrogate and reveal policy actors’ agendas and interests that were being served, or not served, in empowering or oppressing certain groups.
Complementary Dual Theoretical Paradigms: Interpretivism and Critical Theory

Thus far, this chapter has discussed interpretivism and critical theory separately and demonstrated how each is applicable in their own right as theoretical paradigms to frame analysis in a policy study, such as this. Policy is multifaceted and multilayered and “efforts to analyse policy developments are seriously complicated by the mysteries of social problems and the intricacies of public policies” (Malen & Knapp, 1997, p. 419). Furthermore, educational policy is a complex social system (Lingard & Ozga, 2007; Malen & Knapp, 1997). Ozga (2000), together with Guba and Lincoln (2005), argue that combining theoretical paradigms permits various lenses through which such a multifaceted and multilayered system can be explored and deconstructed.

Grimaldi (2012) thus suggests that policy analysis can be enhanced through adopting more than one theoretical paradigm. Grimaldi (2012) argues that this can permit researchers to not only understand policy actors’ perspectives of the policy processes but also explore the connections between policy texts, social structures and systems, so addressing issues of power and revealing a fuller picture of the policy process. Heimans (2012b) also suggests that the adoption of two theoretical paradigms can enable policy studies to broaden their focus from the interpretation of meaning to include investigations of issues of power relationships inherent within policy processes. Vidovich (2007) exemplified the use of two theoretical paradigms in framing policy analysis in an exploration of the links between ‘bigger picture’ contexts at national and global levels, with the ‘smaller picture’ of policies and practices within educational institutions. Vidovich (2007) found that adopting two paradigms enabled examination of the relationship between the intentions of the
policy elite on one hand, and policy enactment at the level of policy practice on the other, thereby elucidating the power relationships which impacted upon global-local policy processes.

This study, which investigated the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on ECEC teachers, adopted complementary dual theoretical paradigms, namely interpretivism and critical theory. Each of these paradigms was used at different points of the analysis to complement each other and enhance the ability of the study to capture the complex processes inherent in the policy processes under investigation, spanning macro (national: Australian) to micro (local: school) levels.

Interpretivism permits investigating and uncovering the meaning being made of policy by policy actors from their perspective (O’Donoghue, 2007). The interpretivist paradigm was thus useful to frame the initial data analysis. It enabled a focus on analysing and uncovering, at each stage and site of the policy process, meaning made by individuals of the policy processes under investigation. Keeping the interpretivist paradigm uppermost at these stages permitted the focus to remain on the individual, so allowing the voices and perspectives of the policy actors to be communicated and heard (Bucci, 2002; Christians, 2005; Scott & Morrison, 2006).

This seemed a necessary, reasonable step before using the critical theory paradigm to move the research towards “critical enlightenment” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 307). Social, historical and cultural contexts that were part of, and shaped, policy processes at the school level were examined (Braun, Ball, Maguire & Hoskins, 2011). The power relationships, as well as social and political issues at play, within the policy processes across the various policy sites were also explored
and exposed (Bonner, 2002; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005).

In this way, the interpretivist paradigm provided the frame for the initial analysis of the data to uncover the meanings made during policy processes under investigation, keeping the focus on participants’ perspectives. Then, critical theory provided a lens through which to frame the meta-analysis (see Chapter Five for details). Context was considered to be a significant influence on the policy processes at the school level (Braun, Ball, Maguire & Hoskins, 2011) and issues and relationships of power were explored across the policy sites.

Adopting the two paradigms to complement each other at different points of the analysis in this investigation thus revealed the individual’s perspectives on policy as well as issues of power. In this way, complementary dual theoretical paradigms facilitated the exploration of the extent to which the intent of the policy elite was put into practice and enacted by those within individual schools.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has presented a discussion of the theoretical paradigms underpinning this study. Complementary dual theoretical paradigms of interpretivism and critical theory were adopted to enable a more complete picture to be exposed of the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on ECEC teachers.

The interpretivist paradigm provided a lens through which to analyse data to understand the meaning being made of the policy process under investigation, from the perspectives of the policy actors at particular sites. The critical theory paradigm framed the meta-analysis across the sites of the policy processes under investigation,
spanning macro (national: Australian) to micro (local: school) levels, to reveal the
issues and relationships of power inherent within these policy processes. In this way,
each of the two theoretical paradigms was used at different points of the analysis in a
complementary way.

The next chapter will detail the study’s methods, including descriptions of
data collection and analysis procedures.
Chapter Five
Methodology

Introduction

The previous chapter detailed the complementary dual theoretical paradigms that framed this investigation into the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on early childhood education and care (ECEC) teachers. This chapter presents the methods used to conduct this study.

First, the reader is presented with the study’s overarching approach to the methodology, being a policy trajectory framework, and this is followed by the research questions derived from this framework. The sections that follow contain descriptions of key aspects of the research design, these being qualitative and case study. There is discussion of the issue of generalisability, in regards to these aspects of the research design, within these sections. After locating the researcher in relation to the study, the chapter describes the data collection processes and data analysis procedures. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how the study has dealt with the issues of trustworthiness, ethics and confidentiality.

Policy Trajectory Framework

Policy, as defined and described in Chapter Three, is a complex, ongoing process (Ball, 1994, 1997). Analysis of policy thus needs to investigate and expose these complexities (Ball, 1994; Braun, Ball, Maguire & Hoskins, 2011; Ozga, 2000), and a policy trajectory framework, as a methodological approach, can recognise and make explicit this dynamic and complex nature of policy (Ball, 1994; Vidovich, 2013).
A policy trajectory framework enables investigation of policy processes within international and national arenas (macro), State or Local Government arenas (meso) and at the local level, in sites such as schools (micro) (Ball, 1994; Vidovich, 2007, 2013; Vidovich & Porter, 1999). It allows policy to be analysed as a cyclical process that goes backwards and forwards between policy actors within, and across, policy sites from global to local levels (Ball, 1994; Vidovich, 2013).

Furthermore, a policy trajectory approach in policy analysis can elucidate processes within, and between, the various levels of policy (Ball, 2003; Luke, 2003; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Teodoro & Estrela, 2010; Vidovich, 2013). This is because a policy trajectory approach allows for the analysis of various contexts within each level, or site, of the policy process, namely context of policy influences, context of policy text production, context of policy practices (enactment), context of policy outcomes and context of political strategy (Ball, 1994; Vidovich, 2013). Analysis of the context of policy influences reveals the impact of various drivers and interactions on policy. Investigation within the context of policy text production examines where and how policy is created as well as the characteristics of policy. Within the context of policy practices (enactment), how policy is enacted and re-created by policy actors is explored. Analysis of the context of policy outcomes considers the long term impact of the policy processes on issues such as equity and social justice, while a focus within the context of political strategy considers actions policy actors may take to improve matters (Ball, 1994; Vidovich, 2013).

The policy trajectory approach in analysis thus can reveal influences on policy processes within and between the global to local levels; the production processes of policy texts within and across the sites; policy practices (enactment) engaged in by key actors within and across the sites; and long term outcomes of
these practices, with analysis then providing for the identification of possible actions that may be taken (Ball, 1994; Vidovich, 2013). Considerations within the context of policy outcomes and the context of political strategy particularly explore and uncover the power relationships inherent in policy (Ball, 1994; O’Donoghue, 2007; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Vidovich & O’Donoghue, 2003b).

Stephen Ball and his colleagues in England (Ball, Hoskins, Maguire & Braun, 2011; Braun, Ball, Maguire & Hoskins, 2011; Braun, Maguire & Ball, 2010; Maguire, Ball & Braun, 2010) reported on their investigations of various school policy processes. Using a policy trajectory approach in analysis, the researchers found a range of influences and power relationships inherent within, and influencing, policy processes at the school level. In response to a lack of direction in how to describe and consider the influence of local contextual factors on school policy processes, Braun et al. (2011) developed a typology of four contextual dimensions: “situated context” (Braun et al., 2011, p. 588), such as the school’s history; “professional context” (Braun et al., 2011, p. 588), such as teacher experience; “material context” (Braun et al., 2011, p. 588), such as the school’s physical infrastructure; and “external context” (Braun et al., 2011, p. 588), such as impact of external assessments on the school. Braun et al. (2011) reported that using this typology helped to identify local factors that contributed to explaining differences in policy processes between the schools. This study similarly used a policy trajectory approach to investigate school literacy policy processes, but in an Australian context, and, within this, applied the work of Braun et al. (2011) in particular by using the typology provided to describe the setting of each school investigated.
Research Questions

This study aimed to investigate the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on ECEC teachers. It was located in selected public schools in the State of Western Australia (WA). The following research questions, used to guide the investigation, were derived from the policy trajectory framework:

1. What are the key influences on literacy policy identified along the policy trajectory, at macro (national: Australia), meso (State: WA) and micro (local: school) levels?
2. What are the main characteristics of literacy policy texts at macro (national: Australia), meso (State: WA) and micro (local: school) levels and how are they produced?
3. How is school literacy policy being enacted by ECEC teachers in public schools in the State of WA?
4. What are the longer term outcomes of the enactment of school literacy policy?

Global contexts are considered in this investigation of school literacy policy processes but data collection only occurred at the national (macro), State (meso) and school (micro) levels in Australia. While data was collected at national (macro) and State (meso) levels, the primary focus was on literacy policy processes in schools at the micro (local: school) level. Although it is recognised that the perspectives of students, parents and other stakeholders would also be insightful, this study was limited at the micro (local: school) level to that of school staff.
Qualitative Research Design

A qualitative research design was adopted in this study. Qualitative research methods allow for the investigation of “people, things and events in their natural settings” (Punch, 2005, p. 141). Qualitative research methods assume that individuals have an active role in the construction of their reality (Boeije, 2010). They allow for the collection of data that captures the perspectives of participants (Punch, 2005, 2009) as participants make meaning from this social reality in which they work or live. Qualitative research thus opens up the world of meaning to the researcher from the perspective of those who are living within that world (Christians, 2005). In this way, qualitative research methods can expose the processes underpinning individuals’ reality as well as their perceptions of that reality (Christians, 2005). Qualitative research methods allow the researcher to describe and understand the meaning participants make of their experiences and events under investigation (Boeije, 2010). Therefore, qualitative research methods are considered useful in research which focuses on social processes and people’s perceptions of them (Silverman, 2010).

There is no one methodological approach in qualitative research as long as the main aim is achieved, this being to gain a holistic view of a context and experience under investigation, through the eyes of the participants (Punch, 2005, 2009; Scott & Morrison, 2006). In qualitative research, data attempts to represent what participants do as they go about their work in that setting (Punch, 2005). Data is collected often by the researcher themselves through contact with participants who are experiencing the life situation that is under investigation (Boeije, 2010; Punch, 2005). The researcher examines and codes the data for themes and patterns to reveal the participant’s perspectives of the experience (Boeije, 2010; Punch, 2005).
Qualitative research, as a “complex, changing and contested field” (Punch, 2005, p. 134), is not without criticism. By its very nature and its focus on people and their perceptions, qualitative research methods are subjective, and this is in tension with those who believe that research should remain dispassionate and objective (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010). Qualitative research methods can uncover many different perspectives of a situation but it is not feasible to capture all possible perspectives of an experience (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010). Furthermore, there is the possibility of multiple interpretations of the data and, with this, an inherent danger of the researcher over-interpreting the data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010; Hammersley, 2005). These limitations impact upon transferability and generalisability of the findings in qualitative research, so making it difficult to directly apply the results of an investigation conducted through qualitative research to other studies in other contexts (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010; Scott & Morrison, 2006).

This study explored the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on ECEC teachers, using the policy trajectory as the overall methodological approach. The ability of qualitative research methods to capture, explore and explicate social, subjective situations within a given context was viewed as its strength in the context of this study.

There was no attempt to generalise findings from this qualitative study. The findings from analysis in qualitative research can be raised above that of detailed description (Punch, 2005) to allow the emergence of concepts and theoretical propositions which, in turn, can be considered for reflection in other jurisdictions and further research (Punch, 2005; Scott & Morrison, 2006; Silverman, 2010). In this study, analysis enabled the development of theoretical propositions about literacy.
policy processes under investigation (see Chapter Eleven) which may be used as ‘food for thought’ in other jurisdictions.

**Instrumental Case Study Design**

This study investigated the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on ECEC teachers. It was located within the public school system of the State of WA.

The public education system in WA is large and expansive. It manages approximately 700 schools located in a geographic area that extends over two million square kilometres. Research cannot “study everyone doing everything” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 27). Thus, research needs to be selective. To enable investigation of policy processes in schools, this study adopted an instrumental case study research design at the micro (local: school) level of the policy trajectory under investigation.

A case is a bounded system, recognised through definable, describable characteristics that are common from one case to another (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010; Punch, 2005; Silverman, 2010; Stake, 2008). Case study allows a researcher to investigate a phenomena in the real life contexts in which it is happening (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010; Silverman, 2010), drawing upon the perspectives of participants within each case (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010; Punch, 2005, 2009; Silverman, 2010; Stake, 2008). Thus, case study is appropriate within qualitative research design.

In an instrumental case study, cases are not chosen at random but rather, chosen for inherent characteristics they possess seen to have the potential to yield data applicable for the given research (Punch, 2005; Silverman, 2010). It allows for
the wholeness and integrity of the case to be preserved, while maintaining the focus on the research questions; that is, it brings together descriptions of participants’ perceptions within the case to describe and investigate the case as a whole (Punch, 2005; Silverman, 2010).

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2010) support the adoption of instrumental case study to investigate policy processes. Stephen Ball and his colleagues in England (Ball, Hoskins, Maguire & Braun, 2011; Braun, Ball, Maguire & Hoskins, 2011; Braun, Maguire & Ball, 2010; Maguire, Ball & Braun, 2010) utilised instrumental case study to explore school policy processes, using a policy trajectory approach, with this study adopting similar aspects of their research design.

In this investigation, adoption of instrumental case study allowed for initial data collection and analysis to reveal individual participants’ perspectives in relation to the research questions within each case. Cross case analysis (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010; Stake, 2008) was incorporated in the meta analysis along the whole policy trajectory from macro to micro levels (see Chapter Eleven), so exposing influences, interdependencies and power relationships inherent within the policy processes.

Case study has the potential to produce rich, descriptive data and thus provides an in-depth study of the case in its own right (Punch, 2005; Silverman, 2010; Stake, 2008). However, a common criticism of the case study research design is in the potential of the data and findings to be generalised to other settings, other contexts and other research (Punch, 2005).

There is no attempt to generalise the findings from this study. However, to “accommodate the readers’ pre-existing knowledge” (Stake, 2008, p. 136), detailed, descriptive data are presented in this study in relation to the cases (see Chapters
Eight, Nine and Ten) to allow readers to make their own judgements about the relevance of the findings to other settings (Stake, 2008). Furthermore, a secondary level of analysis for differences and similarities in themes within and across the case studies, conducted as part of the meta-analysis along the whole policy trajectory under investigation, contributed to the development of theoretical propositions (see Chapter Eleven). These may be used as ‘food for thought’, or reflection, in other studies and other jurisdictions (Boeije, 2010; Scott & Morrison, 2006).

**Locating the Researcher**

It is important for an educational policy researcher to declare their values, beliefs and reasons for engaging in the study. These can affect how the study is framed and conducted (Ozga, 2000) as a researcher’s belief systems and interests can become implicated in, and influence, data collection and analysis (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005; Liasidou, 2008; Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui & O’Garro, 2005; Scott & Morrison, 2006).

The researcher in this study is a practising and experienced ECEC teacher, currently employed in the public education system as an employee of the State Department of Education (DoE) in WA. She is known in her local education district for her interest in literacy and ECEC. She has lead the development and implementation of school literacy policy in schools in rural WA.

Recently, she sensed much change occurring in both literacy education and ECEC in schools. She embarked upon this study to investigate these changes. Her current and past schools were not included as cases in this study. However, her work informed her values and background knowledge as she approached the study. The researcher thus engaged in ongoing reflections, for instance through memos and
notes, on how her values and beliefs were impacting upon data collection and analysis.

**Data Collection Processes**

In accordance with the policy trajectory approach (Ball, 1994; Vidovich, 2013), data was collected from the three levels of the policy trajectory, namely macro (national: Australia), meso (State: WA) and micro (local: school). Empirical data was not collected from international sources. Global trends, as referred to and described in Chapter Two and Chapter Three, constituted part of the overall context within which data collection and analysis were conducted.

At each level, documents were collected and interviews were conducted. At the micro (local: school) level, an instrumental case study design was also implemented. Below is a description of the data collection procedures.

**Documentary data.** Documentary data were used in this investigation as a primary source in themselves (Bowen, 2009), and for triangulation with interview data (Bowen, 2009; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010; Punch, 2005, 2009). Bowen (2009) contends that document analysis is “particularly applicable to qualitative case studies” (Bowen, 2009, p. 29) as it can provide meaning and insights into the phenomenon under investigation within the cases.

In this study, documentary data comprised of relevant written policy texts at the time of data collection, in late 2012, and were ‘natural’ (Have, 2004); that is, they were analysed without any modifications. Below is a table listing the documents collected at each level of the policy trajectory.
Table 5.1: Documents Collected for Analysis at Each Level of the Policy Trajectory.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>DOCUMENT INFORMATION</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Macro (national: Australian)</td>
<td>Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Investing in the Early Years – A National Early Childhood Development Strategy: An Initiative of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2009a</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) for the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Version 3.0 (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2011b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meso (State: WA)</td>
<td>Director General’s Classroom First Strategy (Department of Education (DoE) WA, 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plan for Public Schools 2008-2011 (Department of Education and Training (DET) WA, 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Progressing Classroom First (Department of Education (DoE) WA, 2011a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Early Years of Schooling: An Initiative of the Director General’s Classroom First Strategy (Department of Education (DoE) WA, 2011b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micro (local: school)</td>
<td>Rural District High School (RDHS) Whole School Literacy Plan (RDHS, 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural District High School (RDHS) Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project School Plan (RDHS, 2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suburban Primary School (SPS) Whole School Literacy Plan (SPS, 2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Town Primary School (TPS) Whole School Literacy Plan (TPS, 2012)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Documents collected for analysis at the macro (national: Australian) level were publicly available written policy texts relevant to literacy policy. Documents collected at the meso (State: WA) level were also publicly available. They
constituted a policy ensemble, with each policy published by the State Government department that govern public education in WA, called variously Department of Education (DoE) and Department of Education and Training (DET). Documentary data collected at the macro (national: Australian) and meso (State: WA) level were collected prior to the interviews. Perusing the documents prior to interviews provided background contextual information (Bowen, 2009) relevant to the literacy policy trajectory under investigation. This enhanced the researcher’s knowledge of the area and assisted the researcher in preparing for the interviews.

Documents collected at each school, provided by the leadership of the school, constituted the school’s written literacy policy at the time of data collection. Although labelled as ‘plans’, these were policies as they were intended to “frame, constitute and change educational practices” (Lingard & Ozga, 2007, p. 2), specifically literacy teaching practices.

For each piece of documentary data, notes were made on who the author was, who published the document, who read the document and how it was perceived to be used (Punch, 2005). This information provided important contextual information which contributed to data analysis (Bowen, 2009).

Educational policy is dynamic and evolving. While the written educational policy texts at the national and State levels in Australia were purposefully selected as relevant to the study at the time of data collection in late 2012, there have since been many developments in Australian educational policy. The final chapter (Chapter Twelve) presents an update of literacy policy development in Australia, and WA, subsequent to data collection to highlight ongoing policy evolution.
Interview data. An interview is essentially a goal oriented talk to gather information (Wang & Yan, 2012). Researchers argue that the interview is one of the most powerful ways for a researcher to uncover a participant’s perspective (Borer & Fontana, 2012; Fontana & Frey, 2008; Gubrium & Holstein, 2012). Furthermore, interview is an appropriate qualitative research method of data collection to employ within case study design (Platt, 2012). In this study, interviews provided an additional source of data for the purposes of triangulation (Bowen, 2009; Punch, 2005, 2009).

Beitin (2012) suggests that the research purpose and design determines who is interviewed. While this study was principally focussed on understanding the literacy policy processes at the micro (local: school) level of three case study schools, with the focus on ECEC teachers, it was conducted using a policy trajectory approach (Ball, 1994; Vidovich, 2013). Therefore, interviews were also conducted at national (macro: Australian) and State (meso: WA) levels of the policy trajectory under investigation in this study.

Purposive sampling was used in selecting participants (Beitin, 2012; Scott & Morrison, 2006); that is, the researcher made an informed decision about who to include as participants based upon the research questions and the aims of the study. Once the interviews commenced, participants themselves suggested other participants, so snowball sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Punch, 2005, 2009) was also used to allow additions to the sample. Below is a table detailing participants, including information on sampling and the code used during analysis to protect anonymity.
Table 5.2: Participant Information at Each Level of the Policy Trajectory.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>IDENTITY CODE</th>
<th>PARTICIPANT INFORMATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Macro (national: Australian)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>A key policy actor in the development of the national curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A2, A3</td>
<td>A representative of a national professional organisation for literacy educators or education administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A4</td>
<td>A key ECEC policy advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meso (State: WA)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>W1</td>
<td>A key literacy policy advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>W2, W3, W4</td>
<td>A representative of a State professional organisation for ECEC educators, literacy educators or education administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>W5, W6, W7</td>
<td>A key policy actor at the regional level, DoE (WA), based in schools, with each being either an ECEC, literacy or administrative policy actor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>W8</td>
<td>A key administrative policy actor at a regional level, based in schools but appointed by central office, DoE (WA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>W9, W10, W11</td>
<td>A key policy actor in central office, DoE (WA), with each being an ECEC, literacy or administrative policy actor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micro (local: school): RDHS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>SR1</td>
<td>ECEC Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SR2</td>
<td>Teacher Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SR3</td>
<td>School Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micro (local: school): SPS</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>SS1, SS2, SS3</td>
<td>ECEC Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SS4</td>
<td>Teacher Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SS5</td>
<td>School Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micro (local: school): TPS</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>ST1, ST2, ST3, ST4</td>
<td>ECEC Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ST5</td>
<td>Teacher Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ST6, ST7</td>
<td>School Leader</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Teacher Leaders and School Leaders each had a role in literacy policy management within their own school.*
At both the macro (national: Australian) and meso (State: WA) level, the researcher approached elected individuals with responsibilities for education within both the Australian Federal and WA State Governments. None of these individuals agreed to participate.

At the micro (local: school) level, a number of factors determined who participated in the study in each school. Access to participants was primarily determined by the Principal of each school, once the Principal agreed for the school to participate in the study. The number of participants in each school was then determined by the school’s size. For instance, a smaller school had fewer ECEC teachers on staff. Availability of potential participants on the day that the researcher visited the school also determined who participated in interviews. For instance, the researcher required approximately seven hours travel by road to reach one school. On the day of the site visit, a second ECEC teacher was not available, and this person declined to participate by telephone interview following the researcher’s visit.

Interviews were conducted after participants had been informed of the study’s intents and aims and provided their consent for participation (see Appendices B and C). Interviews used semi-structured questions (Borer & Fontana, 2012; Fontana & Frey, 2008; Scott & Morrison, 2006) (See Appendices D and E). Semi-structured interviews use guiding questions, developed from the research questions, but the interviewer is able to probe participants’ perspectives further using additional questions depending on the participant’s responses (Borer & Fontana, 2012; Gubrium & Holstein, 2012; Scott & Morrison, 2006).

Interviews have the potential to become complex, collaborative social encounters, as two (or more) people jointly construct meaning and produce knowledge (Gubrium & Holstein, 2012; Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti & McKinney,
Interviews are situated within a sociocultural context that potentially encompasses and draws upon myriad of social and cultural forces (Borer & Fontana, 2012) which may result in power relationships between the interviewer and participant (Wang & Yan, 2012). These forces are framed and affected by many factors which include how well the participant knows the interviewer, both the interviewer’s and participant’s background, agenda and knowledge, the interviewer’s qualifications, experience and expertise in the field as well as the location of the interview (Gubrium & Holstein, 2012; Herzog, 2012; Warren, 2012). They can restrict the ability of the interviewer in uncovering the participant’s perspective. For instance, the interviewer can be seen by the participant as maintaining control over what information is deemed important through the questions and probes used (Wang & Yan, 2012). The participant may subsequently feel that they are being interrogated, under pressure (Have, 2004) and/or restricted in their abilities to voice their perspective (Gubrium et al., 2012).

In this study, the researcher was the interviewer. She recognised the above issues as having potential to affect the interview, and the data obtained. The researcher thus began each interview with establishing rapport with the participant. For instance, she explicitly declared her interests in the research and described her background. As each interview progressed, she allowed the participant to feel that they had some control of the interview (Wang & Yan, 2012) by following their lead as themes emerged. Wang and Yan (2012) contend that this encourages the participant to talk more freely and openly in the interview, so enabling the participant’s perspective to be further revealed. Notes were also made on the location of the interview and demeanour of the participant (Herzog, 2012; Warren, 2012).
Most interviews were conducted face-to-face. However, telephone interviews were necessary at times to allow access to participants, who were otherwise not available to the researcher due to distance or time constraints. It is acknowledged that telephone interviews do not allow for consideration of non-verbal language and cues, so having limitations (Wilson & Sapsford, 2006).

Each interview was digitally recorded with informed consent of the participant (see Appendices B and C) and later transcribed by the researcher. Transcription does not exhaust the potential of the data (Hammersley, 2010). Transcripts are “tools” (Hammersley, 2010, p. 565), representing only aspects of the spoken data in relation to the research question and aim rather than its entirety. The digital recordings of the interviews will be kept securely for a period seven years, as required by ethics protocols.

**Case study selection.** Purposive sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Punch, 2005; Scott & Morrison, 2006; Silverman, 2010; Stake, 2008) was used to select case study schools at the micro (local: school) level. This allowed the researcher to sample in a deliberate way with a set focus, choosing cases that met specific criteria determined in relation to the research questions and the research aim. This maintained the instrumental nature of each case.

The criteria used to select each case were as follows:

1. School located in WA under the management of the DoE (WA),
2. Must have a school literacy policy in place, and
3. Have ECEC teachers working there.

Cases were initially deemed to meet the main criteria through the analysis of information from the publicly available website *Schools Online*. 
This provides a brief description of schools under the management of the DoE (WA).

The researcher initially entered the key words “school literacy policy” into the search engine on this website and two schools were returned. However, one of these was the school at which she worked, which she did not include in the study, and the other was located a considerable distance away. When the key words “literacy” and “primary” were entered in the search engine, a further eighteen schools were returned. When invited to participate, none of these schools accepted. Some of these schools reported that they had recently participated in research conducted by other organisations, some were difficult to access due to distance and geographical constraints, while many provided no reason for their inability to participate. Following this, the researcher accessed schools through the networks of two professional associations of which she was a member. Using the information available through these networks, six schools were identified as meeting the criteria and the Principals were approached to participate. Three of these agreed for their school to participate in the research.

The three case study schools selected were found to vary in local contextual factors (Braun, Ball, Maguire & Hoskins, 2011). For instance, one case was located in the metropolitan region of WA. Another was a large primary school in a regional district and the third was a district high, or secondary, school in the rural area of WA. Descriptions of other local contextual factors for each case, using the typology provided by Braun et al. (2011), are included in the presentation of the findings (See Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten).
Data Analysis Procedures

Two approaches were adopted in the analysis of data. Thematic analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014) was used to extract themes and categories from the data. Critical discourse analysis (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2003, 2013; Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui & O’Garro, 2005; Taylor, 2004) was used in taking the analysis beyond the words themselves to reveal issues of power inherent in the data. What follows are detailed descriptions of each of these data analysis procedures.

Thematic analysis. Data was initially analysed using thematic analysis procedures (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014) to reveal perspectives of participants and meaning conveyed through the documents. This involved three main components in a continuous and reiterative process, namely data condensation or reduction, data display, and verifying and drawing conclusions from the data (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014; Punch, 2009). Processes within each component included coding (Saldaña, 2013), memoing (Punch, 2009) and drawing conclusions through tactics such as abstracting and comparing (Punch, 2009). In this way, the thematic analysis approach enabled the emergence of themes which then allowed for identification of commonalities and differences in the data (Harding, 2013).

To begin analysis, a summary was created for each data set and identified topics and subtopics were listed in an initial phase of data condensation, or reduction. This summary was noted in a separate document together with initial notes relevant to each research question.

“First cycle” (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014, p. 73) codes were identified to facilitate further data condensation. A code captures the essence or
meaning of a portion of the data (Saldaña, 2013), so summarising, distilling and reducing the data further. In this way, codes become “prompts or triggers” (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014, p. 73) that facilitate continuous and reiterative reflection upon the data’s meaning. They can be grouped to allow for categories, concepts and themes to later emerge (Harding, 2013; Lichtman, 2010; Saldaña, 2013).

Codes were tabled as they were identified against the relevant data, with this process facilitating data display. Miles and Huberman (1994) regard data display as essential throughout thematic analysis as it enhances validity. Data display also allows for monitoring frequency of codes, and subsequent emergence of categories (Lichtman, 2010). In this study, codes and categories were displayed within the same worksheet as they emerged. This continuous and reiterative process was followed for each research question, each data set in turn. Memoing (Punch, 2009) throughout allowed for reflection as the analysis proceeded.

“Second cycle” (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014, p. 73) codes, or patterning codes, emerged through examination of initial codes. These were grouped as themes, or concepts (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Lichtman, 2010). Examination of these then allowed for implicit topics to emerge (Lichtman, 2010; Saldaña, 2013) which were used in drawing conclusions relevant to each research question. This contributes to the next level of data analysis to a more abstract level in which themes, and topics, can be grouped into theoretical constructs or propositions (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

The table below shows a sample analysis. This data was taken from an interview conducted at the micro (local: school) level, situated in one of the case study schools. The sample demonstrates how initial data was coded during the data
condensation and display stages, using first and then second cycle coding, and how this process then resulted in the emergence of themes, later used as implicit topics from which to draw conclusions. Themes, and topics, were then compared with others in the development of theoretical constructs or propositions.

Table 5.3: Sample Thematic Analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview question</th>
<th>First cycle coding:</th>
<th>Second cycle coding:</th>
<th>Theme emergence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What influences the construction of literacy policy in your school?</td>
<td>And it’s because of NAPLAN//</td>
<td>NAPLAN accountability</td>
<td>School competitive positioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s on everyone’s lips and that everything you know this whole year’s been about NAPLAN//</td>
<td>High stakes testing</td>
<td>accountability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case management and target setting//</td>
<td>accountability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL to do with NAPLAN//</td>
<td>NAPLAN accountability</td>
<td></td>
<td>School competitive positioning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Critical discourse analysis (CDA).** CDA (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2002, 2003, 2013; Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui & O’Garro, 2005; Taylor, 2004) was used to analyse the data to make visible the power relationships inherent in the language used. Below is a description of CDA, followed by details of how it has been applied in this study.

CDA encompasses many ways of conducting analyses. It finds unity in common assumptions that view language as a social practice produced within, and reflective of, social, historical and cultural contexts that have inherent relationships
of power (Hyatt, 2013; Rogers, Malancharuivil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui and O’Garro, 2005; Taylor, 2004; Wodak, 2001). CDA thus goes beyond the meaning of individual words and utilises discourse as its central concept (Hyatt, 2013). CDA uncovers how both the structures of the text (linguistic aspects) and the social/interactive processes (discourse aspects) work together in creating and sustaining relationships of power, domination and privilege in the interaction, institution or body of knowledge (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 1989, 2003, 2013; Hyatt, 2013; Rogers et al., 2005; Taylor, 2004; Wodak, 2001).

In this study, policy is seen as a complex, ongoing process (Ball, 1994, 1997) (see Chapter Three). It is the outcome of struggles between competing agendas and interests, so that policy processes are full of contestation and negotiation of power relationships (Ball, Maguire, Braun & Hoskins, 2011; Levinson, Sutton & Winstead, 2009; Maguire, Ball & Braun, 2010; Ozga, 2000; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

CDA is considered appropriate as an analytical tool in policy analysis (Hyatt, 2013; Taylor, 2004). In combining linguistic analysis with social analysis (Taylor, 2004), CDA can expose the power relations inherent within and along the policy trajectory and how they impact upon policy processes (Hyatt, 2013; Taylor, 2004).

The process of CDA adopted in this study is based upon the work of Fairclough (1989, 2002, 2003, 2013), made accessible for and applicable in policy analysis by Taylor (2004) and later Hyatt (2013). Analysis began with placing the data within an organisational frame (Fairclough, 2003) that described the social networks of practice within which policy processes occurred (Taylor, 2004). Following this, analysis then explored the language used for evidence of policy levers and drivers (Steer et al., 2007) as well as warrants (Cochrane-Smith & Fries, 2001), these being further justification, authority or reason for the policy. For
instance, in this stage of analysis, a document’s language may reveal evidence of financial policy levers which then accounted for the emergence of an accountability warrant.

Analysis then further deconstructed the language used to reveal the following: modes of legitimation, such as authorisation; interdiscursivity, this being how genres and discourses interweave with each other within a text, and; intertextuality, this being identifiable sections taken directly from other texts (Hyatt, 2013). The data set was also analysed for its linguistic structures, with this stage drawing upon techniques from Systematic Functional Linguistics (Halliday, 1976, 1985; Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Webster, 2009). Analysis at this stage thus focussed on vocabulary, grammatical features and clausal combinations and, within this, structures such as pronouns, verbs and voice (Taylor, 2004). Results of the analysis were used to identify themes relevant to the social practices, or discourses, inherent in the text (Hyatt, 2013). Thus, linguistics aspects were linked with social processes in identifying issues of power and representation of interests and ideology (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2003; Hyatt, 2013; Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui & O’Garro, 2005; Taylor, 2004). Once each piece of data was analysed, the data was brought together and themes and concepts identified within and across the whole policy trajectory.

Fairclough (2003), Hyatt (2013) and Taylor (2004) recommend that CDA be accompanied by other forms of social analysis, such as detailed ethnography, to inform and complete the picture, particularly in regards to the context. This study included notes about the setting of each case and considered the effects of local factors on policy processes, based upon the work of Braun, Ball, Maguire and Hoskins (2011). However, due to time constraints, no further ethnographic work was
The Council of Australian Governments [authorisation: legitimisation] has developed this Framework to assist [policy steering] educators [noun: education focus] to provide young children [protective discourse] with opportunities to maximise their potential [political warrant] and develop a foundation [ECEC foundational to later learning] for future success in learning. In this way, the Early Years Learning Framework (the Framework) will contribute to realising the Council of Australian Governments’ vision that: “All [equity] children have the best start [quality: competitiveness and comparative discourse] in life to create a better [quality: comparative] future for themselves and for the nation.” 1 [intertextuality with Investing in the Early Years] [contribution to the economy] [political warrant: legitimisation]

The Framework draws on conclusive international evidence [research, authorisation: legitimisation] that early childhood is a vital [adjective: urgency and importance] period in children’s [protective discourse] learning [education focus] and development. It has been developed with considerable input [apparent broad consultation] from the early childhood sector, early childhood academics and the Australian and State and Territory Governments [implied unity, authorisation: legitimisation].
Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of the data was enhanced through process of triangulation. The findings from the documentary data at each the macro (national: Australia), meso (State: WA) and micro (local: school) levels were triangulated with other documentary data and the interview data (Bowen, 2009; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010; Punch, 2005, 2009; Stake, 2008). This contributed to strengthening the validity and trustworthiness of the data set (Bowen, 2009; Have, 2004).

Furthermore, comparing and contrasting data across the three cases, through cross case analysis incorporated within the meta-analysis along the whole policy trajectory, facilitated additional triangulation of the data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010; Punch, 2005; Stake, 2008). In this, the themes and concepts that emerged from one case study were checked against the findings of another, so strengthening the trustworthiness, or the validity, precision and reliability of the case study data (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Punch, 2005; Silverman, 2010; Stake, 2008). Inclusion of information about local factors in data collection and analysis in schools also became useful in this process. For instance, similarities of themes and concepts between the case studies strengthened the reliability and validity of the data while differences, in the main, could be explained with reference to descriptions of local contextual factors.

Trustworthiness was further enhanced through creating an audit trail of the data collection procedures and analysis processes (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010). There was also member checking (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010) during data analysis and in the drawing together of results.
**Ethics and Confidentiality**

This study involved interviewing human participants. Ethics permission for this investigation was obtained from the University of Western Australia Human Rights and Ethics Committee. In addition, approval was obtained from the DoE (WA) to allow the researcher access to visit the public school sites and to interview public school staff.

All participants were provided with the necessary information about the study to enable informed consent to participate (see Appendices B and C). Permission to record and transcribe interviews was obtained prior to the interviews and participants were given the opportunity to withdraw their participation at any time (see Appendices B and C). Participants were provided with the opportunity to view transcripts of their interview for accuracy (see Appendices B and C).

Removal of identifying information, such as details of job titles, and use of pseudonyms during analysis ensured that confidentiality and anonymity were maintained. In addition, school location sites were not revealed in description of the case studies and each school site was also named with a pseudonym (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Punch, 2005). Digital recordings will be stored in a secured area for a period of seven years after thesis submission, according to ethics protocol, and then destroyed.

Documents collected at the macro (national: Australian) and meso (State: WA) level of the policy trajectory under investigation in this study were available in the public domain, so not requiring ethics approval. Documents from individual schools were obtained with permission from each school. These were de-identified through pseudonym names to maintain anonymity of the school.
Conclusion

This chapter outlined the methodological processes and procedures used in this study aimed to investigate the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on ECEC teachers. The study was located in selected public schools in the State of WA.

The chapter began with an overview of the overarching framework used in this study, namely a policy trajectory approach, and outlined the research questions, derived from the policy trajectory. The chapter then presented details of key aspects of the study’s research design, namely qualitative research and instrumental case study, and included a discussion of the issue of generalisability. The chapter provided a description of the data collection processes, with these occurring within the three levels of the policy trajectory, these being macro (national: Australian), meso (State: WA) and micro (local: school). Following this, there were details of the data analysis procedures, namely thematic analysis and CDA. The chapter concluded with a discussion of how issues of trustworthiness, ethics and confidentiality have been addressed in this investigation.

The next five chapters present the findings from the analysis of the literacy policy trajectory under investigation. It begins with the macro (national: Australian) level of this policy trajectory and progresses through to the meso (State: WA) level and the three case studies investigated at the micro (local: school) level.
Chapter Six

Findings from the Macro (National: Australian) Level of the Literacy Policy Trajectory: Focus on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

The next five chapters present the findings from this study into the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on early childhood education and care (ECEC) teachers. These five chapters are structured similarly, as summarised below:

The Format of Chapters Six to Ten

Chapters Six to Ten present the findings from analysis of data collected from the literacy policy trajectory under investigation. Chapter Six presents findings from the macro (national: Australian) level. Chapter Seven presents findings from the meso (State: Western Australian) level. Chapters Six and Seven describe the broad milieu of policy activity within which policy processes at the school level occurred, this being the main focus of this study. Chapters Eight to Ten present findings from the micro (local: school) level through three case study schools.

Analysis at each level was through the policy contexts (see details in Chapter Five). Chapters Six and Seven each presents the findings through two policy contexts, namely those of influences and text production. The findings in each of Chapters Eight to Ten are presented through all four of the policy contexts, including those of practices (enactment) and outcomes.

Through the body of the text in Chapters Six to Ten, findings are grouped around themes, which are bolded, and contributory sub-themes, which are bolded and italicised. Quotes used from the data to illustrate the findings are referenced according to their respective source (see details in Chapter Five).
Introduction to Chapter Six

This chapter presents themes that were identified from the analysis of documentary and interview data collected at the macro (national: Australian) level of the literacy policy trajectory under investigation in this study. Data sources, collection and analysis procedures at the macro (national: Australian) level are detailed in Chapter Five.

The findings are presented in the sections below, first from each document analysed at the macro (national: Australia) level and these are later triangulated with the interview data. Excerpts from the data are used to illustrate the findings. Where quotes from participants are used, these are referenced using a code that begins with (A), meaning ‘Australia’.

Context of Policy Influences

This section presents the findings from analysis of the context of policy influences. Below is a table that summarises the themes and sub-themes identified in the documentary and interview data.
Table 6.1. Themes and Sub-Themes Identified in the Analysis of Context of Policy Influences at the Macro (National: Australian) Level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Documentary data</td>
<td>Australia’s international competitive positioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview data</td>
<td>Australia’s international competitive positioning</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), 2008), hereafter called the *Melbourne Declaration*, set a new direction for Australian education. The policy heralded many of the developments contained in other national educational policy that followed. Analysis of policy influences in the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008) revealed a dominant theme, namely concerns about Australia’s international competitive positioning, together with various sub-themes, namely education is important, the push for improved educational outcomes and quality and equity.

The *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008) opened with: “In the 21st century Australia’s capacity to provide a high quality of life for all will depend on the ability to compete in the global economy on knowledge and innovation.” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4). This statement was early indication of the dominant influential force on national educational policy of concerns about Australia’s international competitive positioning. The statement linked enhanced international
competitiveness with the achievement of quality of life for Australians, embedding ‘quality’ within a discourse of competitiveness which reflected the underlying neoliberal ideology of the policy. Persuasive force was added through a social democratic discourse of ‘inclusivity’, evident in the word ‘all’, and further magnified by inclusion of the modal verb ‘will’ and the placement of the statement as the opening to the policy.

In the statements that followed in the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008), education was accorded an important role. Education was linked with the nation’s economic growth, thus positioned to contribute to Australia’s global economic competitiveness. For instance, it was stated that education will equip Australians with the “knowledge, understandings, skills and values” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4) to compete in the global economy and that: “Schools play a vital role … in ensuring the nation’s ongoing prosperity” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4), with the adjective ‘vital’ positioning this role as important.

Pursuit of improved educational outcomes in Australia thus seemed logical and this was accorded credibility in the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008) through key goals of quality and equity. For instance, improvements in educational outcomes were positioned in the policy as “striving for both equity and excellence” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 5), with the word ‘excellence’ implying the notion of ‘quality’. On the same page, the policy highlighted apparent failure by the Australian education system to achieve quality and equity, particularly for its Indigenous population. Negative comparative language was used to state that, in the context of international data, Australia had “failed to improve educational outcomes” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 5) in this population. This implied that not all young Australians were experiencing quality and equity in educational outcomes, with the
implication being that this was adversely affecting Australia’s international positioning. The goals of both quality and equity, within the pursuit for improvements, thus became articulated within economic and competitive discourses. This was further indication of the dominant neoliberal ideology underpinning the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008).

The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Version 3.0 (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2011b), hereafter called The Shape of the Australian Curriculum, framed the structure and content of a proposed national curriculum in Australia. Analysis of policy influences revealed a dominant theme, namely concerns about Australia’s international competitive positioning, together with various sub-themes, these being education is important, the push for improved educational outcomes and quality and equity.

Early in The Shape of the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2011b), it was stated that the proposed national curriculum would: “contribute to the provision of a world-class education” (ACARA, 2011b, p. 5), through equipping students with skills that would allow them to “compete in the globalised world” (ACARA, 2011b, p. 26). This competitive language, that was reflective of neoliberal underpinnings, highlighted how the influence of concerns with Australia’s international competitiveness had, in turn, accorded education an important role in this policy. Statements that followed in The Shape of the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2011b) highlighted the goals of quality and equity in the pursuit of improved educational outcomes to enhance international positioning. For instance, the policy stated that the proposed curriculum would improve “the quality, equity … of Australia’s education system” (ACARA, 2011b, p. 5). Later, in a further reference to equity, the policy used social democratic language to declare that “each student”
(ACARA, 2011b, p. 10) has an “entitlement”, or right, (ACARA, 2011b, p. 10) to the knowledge provided by the proposed national curriculum. The word ‘entitlement’ also suggested a sense that justice would be served by this curriculum so that “all young Australians … become competent members of the community” (ACARA, 2011b, p. 10), with the word ‘all’ implying inclusivity and access. Through these statements that reflected the influence of neoliberal and, to a lesser extent, social democratic values, underpinning The Shape of the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2011b), the proposed national curriculum was positioned as logical, just and almost an essential development.

*Investing in the Early Years – A National Early Childhood Development Strategy: An Initiative of the Council of Australian Governments* (Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2009a), hereafter called *Investing in the Early Years*, was the strategic plan for the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector in Australia. It contained evidence of various policy influences, with concerns about Australia’s international competitive positioning being the dominant theme, and education is important, the push for improved educational outcomes and quality and equity contributing as sub-themes.

In *Investing in the Early Years* (COAG, 2009a), the statement: “Australia is well placed to … remain internationally competitive” (COAG, 2009a, p. 4), was evidence of the persistent influence at this level of concerns about Australia’s positioning in the global economy. The competitive discourse, in ‘internationally competitive’, reflected the underlying neoliberal ideology. There was also evidence of how the pursuit of improved educational outcomes, and the key goals of quality and equity, influenced *Investing in the Early Years* (COAG, 2009a). For instance, early in the text, the policy argued for improvements “for all children, reducing
inequalities” (COAG, 2009a, p. 4), with the word ‘all’ emphasising the social
democratic notions of inclusivity and access. This added credibility to the pursuit of
equity, which was to be achieved through ‘reducing inequalities’. As Investing in the
Early Years (COAG, 2009a) progressed, quality and equity became more frequently
embedded, and articulated, within neoliberal discourses. For instance, the policy
associated quality ECEC, using economic discourses, with achieving fiscal or
economic worth and value, bringing “cost benefits” (COAG, 2009a, p. 8-9) and
“returns” (COAG, 2009a, p. 8-9) to the economy. Afterward, the policy argued,
using comparative discourses, that Australia did not have the desired ‘quality’ or
‘equity’ in ECEC, when it stated: “Australia compares unfavourably with other
OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development] countries on a
number of measures of child health and wellbeing” (COAG, 2009a, p. 10), citing
quantitative data to support this declaration that showed Australian outcomes
considerably lower compared to other countries in the Organisation for Economic
Co-operation and Development (OECD). These comparative discourses strengthened
the impression in Investing in the Early Years (COAG, 2009a) that the Australian
ECEC sector was neither equitable nor of ‘quality’. The national policy elite was
thus accorded power to instigate reform to pursue equity, and improve quality, in
Australia’s ECEC sector, to enhance the status of Australia’s international
competitive positioning. The policy heralded an inaugural national curriculum for
students in ECEC as part of this reform agenda, thereby according education an
important role in achieving this aim.

Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for
Australia (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
[DEEWR] for the Council of Australian Governments [COAG], 2009), hereafter
called *The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)*, was the inaugural national curriculum in Australia for children from birth to five years of age. As this policy stemmed from the reform agenda for ECEC heralded in the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008) and detailed in *Investing in the Early Years* (COAG, 2009a), the *EYLF* (DEEWR for COAG, 2009) represented specific action in response to the influence of concerns about Australia’s international competitive positioning. Within the rhetoric of the *EYLF* (DEEWR for COAG, 2009), the theme of **education is important** was identified as a dominant policy influence, with **the push for improved educational outcomes** and **quality and equity** contributing as sub-themes of policy influences.

The *EYLF* (DEEWR for COAG, 2009), as a curriculum for children in ECEC, immediately provided evidence of education being accorded an important role in a sector perceived as traditionally having a greater emphasis on care. There was also evidence in the *EYLF* (DEEWR for COAG, 2009) of the pursuit of improved educational outcomes, with the key goals of quality and equity used to add credibility. For instance, it stated that the curriculum would provide “quality teaching and learning” (DEEWR for COAG, 2009, p. 5) experiences, with these educative ‘experiences’ positioned to provide “all children with the best start to life” (DEEWR for COAG, 2009, p. 5). While the word ‘all’ implied socially democratic discourses of inclusivity and access, the word ‘best’, linked to quality, implied competition, with this revealing the underpinning neoliberal ideology. Later in the *EYLF* (DEEWR for COAG, 2009), the goal of equity was articulated within an effectiveness discourse, also reflective of neoliberal ideology, when the policy stated that educators, through implementing the curriculum, would “find equitable and effective ways to ensure that all children have opportunities to achieve learning...
outcomes” (DEEWR for COAG, 2009, p. 13). The words ‘learning outcomes’ reinforced the importance placed on education in ECEC in the EYLF (DEEWR for COAG, 2009).

Findings from the interview data also revealed various themes of policy influences, with concerns about Australia’s international competitive positioning being dominant, while education is important, the push for improved educational outcomes and quality and equity, were contributory sub-themes. One participant, in commenting about the comparative and competitive discourses that were embedded in national educational policy, exposed the competitive neoliberal influences on policy at the macro (national: Australian) level. The participant commented: “Of course we want to know how we’re faring compared to other countries” (A4), here referring to the international data available from the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). To this participant, it seemed logical that Australia’s positioning in these international measurements of educational achievements would influence policy.

Many participants frequently commented about the influence on policy of the national literacy and numeracy testing regime within Australia, namely the National Assessment Program–Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) (see Chapter Two). Through the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008), NAPLAN was established to provide diagnostic data to support the attainment of improved learning outcomes seen to ultimately enhance Australia’s international positioning. NAPLAN data is made publicly available online through the MySchool website (https://www.myschool.edu.au/) (see Chapter Two), so enabling comparisons in performances to be made between schools within Australia. These comparative and competitive discourses position NAPLAN as a performance indicator.
Participants’ comments revealed tensions around the influence of NAPLAN, and the neoliberal competitive ideology that underpinned it. One participant named this national testing regime as ‘high stakes’, explaining: “NAPLAN, as the major high stakes testing, is having a profound effect” (A3) on Australian education.

Another participant explained this ‘effect’ further: “Data ... and recording of data drives the system [to improve]” (A4), the ‘system’ being the Australian education system. In the opinion of this participant, data from NAPLAN, and on the MySchool website, meant that, in the pursuit of competitive positioning through the testing regime, “teachers’ professional judgments” (A4) were becoming less important. This opinion was similarly expressed by another participant, who said: “It [NAPLAN] took judgments out of the control of teachers” (A1), instead placing more emphasis on students’ performances in this external testing regime.

Some participants described how NAPLAN data and the MySchool website, in allowing for comparisons to be made between schools of similar socio-economic status, were being used to support the pursuit of equity and quality in the Australian education system. One participant said that the publication of the NAPLAN data online: “Allowed them [individual schools] to look at other schools [of similar socio-economic status] faring better than they” (A1). This participant continued that this meant schools: “Cannot justify low performance on the basis of poor social background” (A1); that is, they must pursue equity, as well as quality, with each measured through improvements in performances in NAPLAN. Another participant similarly observed that policy at this macro (national: Australian) level was mostly “about equity; about closing the gap” (A4) in outcomes between those at the lower and higher ends of socioeconomic status, with NAPLAN as the performance indicator for this. These comments revealed how the goals of quality and equity had
become embedded within neoliberal discourses of competitiveness and comparisons to influence policy, so that a participant commented: “The pursuit of equity and quality is all through the rhetoric of the present Australian Federal Government” (A1).

In the analysis of policy influences of the ensemble of policy documents collected at the macro (national: Australian) level, a number of themes and sub-themes emerged. Concerns about Australia’s international competitive positioning was dominant across the data. Various sub-themes contributed, namely education is important, the push for improved educational outcomes and quality and equity. Quality and, to a lesser extent equity, were frequently embedded within discourses that reflected the dominance of a neoliberal ideology. Interview data paralleled these findings.

Context of Policy Text Production

This section presents the findings from analysis of the data in the context of policy text production. Below is a table that summarises the themes and sub-themes identified in the documentary and interview data.
In the analysis of policy text production of the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008), there emerged a number of dominant themes, namely *change*, *in the national interest* and *apparent broad consultation*. Relevant to this study, the dominant themes of *literacy is foundational* and *ECEC is foundational*, with a contributory sub-theme of *education focus*, were identified.

In the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008), the need for change in the Australian education system was rationalised through highlighting the impact of globalisation. For instance, global educational trends were described as “major changes in the world that are placing new demands on Australian education” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4). The adjective ‘major’, which attributed importance to these global trends, together with the word ‘demands’, positioned these as global imperatives that must be met through urgent action. The discourse of change that
followed emphasised the benefits of change, and present tense statements made change inevitable.

Furthermore, change was positioned in the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008) to be in the national interest. Comparative and competitive discourses implied that, if there was no response to these global imperatives, Australia would lose its ability to be competitive in the global economy. For instance, although “Australia has developed a high quality world-class schooling system, which performs strongly against other countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 5), the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008) declared: “Australia should aspire to improve outcomes for all young Australians to become second to none amongst the world’s best school systems” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 5). Use of the modal verb ‘should’, with the verb of vision ‘aspire’, evoked a sense of obligation to act and pursue this aspiration, as a synonym for ‘should’ is ‘ought to’. Social democratic language, evidenced in the word ‘all’, implied inclusivity and access. The comparative and competitive language in ‘second to none’ made the target clear; that is, Australia must aim to be ‘first’.

As the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008) continued, the notion of change in the national interest was strengthened by an underlying co-operative federalism discourse. There was frequent use of the term ‘Australian’ throughout, such as “Australian education” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4) and frequent use of the phrase “all school sectors” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 10 - 17), with this referring to both private (Independent and Catholic) and public schooling. Furthermore, the phrase “Australian governments [would] … commit” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 10 - 17) to actions delineated in the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008) was repeated
often in the policy’s text. These actions included implementation of a national testing regime and a national curriculum, despite there already being testing regimes and curriculum in each of the States and Territories. There was no mention of individual action by State and Territory Governments, this omission adding strength to the underlying co-operative federalism discourse in the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008). Frequent use of the word ‘Australian’ added persuasive force as it implied that it was almost ‘un-Australian’ to not agree with the direction of this policy. The verb ‘commit’ denoted strong incontestable action which added credibility to the notion of these ‘Australian governments’ working together across jurisdictions and sectors. This further strengthened the co-operative federalism discourse and accorded the national policy elite with power to take Australia in the direction of a cohesive system of schooling across the nation. Throughout the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008), the named beneficiary of change was a ‘child’ rather than a ‘student’. This ‘protective’ discourse evoked a sense of obligation and duty in the reader to accept this change agenda.

Furthermore, the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008) was positioned as having been produced through apparent broad consultation processes. This implied national agreement added further strength to the underlying co-operative federalism discourse. On the inside page of the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008), all the Australian Education Ministers, at Federal, State and Territory levels, were listed as signatories without mention of their political affiliations. This implied bi-partisanship suggested that production of the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008) had occurred through consultation which had transcended political divisions. Later, this was reinforced: “The goals were informed by extensive national and jurisdictional consultation” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 20), with the
adjective ‘extensive’ implying wide-reaching. On this same page, members of the Working Party, who were credited with developing the policy content, were listed with their organisational affiliations, adding strength to the impression that consultation had transcended the divides of government and education sectors. These consultation processes created a perception of agreement and unity in purpose and direction across Australia. However, consultation with stakeholders such as parents, teachers or students, was not mentioned; that is, their voices were omitted.

Within the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008), an economic discourse, which was reflective of a neoliberal ideology, accorded literacy an important role in “ensuring the nation’s ongoing prosperity” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4) and contribute to enhancing Australia’s international status in the global economy. Literacy was positioned as foundational to learning, being described variously as a “cornerstone of schooling” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 5), “essential” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 8) and a “foundation for success” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 8). Accordingly, the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008) proposed a national curriculum that would have “a strong focus on literacy” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 12), with the adjective ‘strong’ adding persuasive force. The policy also heralded the introduction of national testing regime of literacy, this being NAPLAN, which overruled existing State and Territory testing regimes.

In the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008), the provision of ‘quality’ ECEC was stated as “central to the nation’s social and economic prosperity” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 7). This economic discourse, embedded within a neoliberal ideological frame, assigned this sector a foundational role in the national change agenda aimed to enhance international positioning. This was reinforced when it was declared later in the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008) that: “Quality early
childhood education and care sets the foundation” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 11) for, and provides the child with, “a basis for life and learning” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 11). The language and phrasing used here emphasised education, rather than care alone, in ECEC.

The analysis of policy text production of The Shape of the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2011b) revealed a number of dominant themes, namely change, in the national interest, and apparent broad consultation. Relevant to this study, the dominant themes of literacy is foundational, with a contributory sub-theme of definitions of literacy, and ECEC is foundational, with a contributory sub-theme of education focus, were also revealed.

The Shape of the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2011b) framed the national curriculum. A national curriculum was a new notion in Australia, where each individual State and Territory had its own curriculum. The Shape of the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2011b) repeated the global imperatives from the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008) to establish the rationale for change, and then declared: “education must … respond to these remarkable changes” (ACARA, 2011b, p. 7) through “working nationally” (ACARA, 2011b, p. 7) in the implementation of the proposed curriculum. The words ‘working nationally’ implied a national change agenda, reflective of an underlying co-operative federalism discourse, while the use of the modal verb ‘must’ persuaded that this response was beyond question; the proposed national curriculum was necessary. Additional persuasive force was added through the impression that The Shape of the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2011b) had been produced through apparent broad consultation processes that had achieved national agreement of purpose, this strengthening the underlying co-operative federalism discourse. The policy’s author,
namely ACARA, an Australian Federal Government funded organisation (see Chapter Two), was described in the policy as “an outcome of many years of national collaboration in education” (ACARA, 2011b, p. 4). The words ‘many years’ and ‘collaboration’ gave the impression of long-term unity, and implied agreement, within ACARA which, in turn, accorded ACARA with credibility in producing national policy. The Shape of the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2011b) declared that ACARA’s work in developing the national curriculum represented a “willingness to work together, across geographical and school-sector boundaries” (ACARA, 2011b, p. 7). The words ‘work together’ further reinforced the impression that The Shape of the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2011b), and the national curriculum it proposed, had been produced through consultation, and with agreement, that had transcended geographical and education sector divides across Australia. Keeping the members of consultation groups as unstated implied that no one had been omitted. This added further persuasive force to the notion of agreement, and the underlying co-operative federalism discourse.

The Shape of the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2011b) positioned literacy as foundational for students’ learning. It defined literacy in two ways. Literacy was described as one of the “General Capabilities” (ACARA, 2011b, p. 15) to be taught in an integrated way across the curriculum “to help students become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens” (ACARA, 2011b, p. 15). Later, The Shape of the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2011b) defined literacy more specifically as comprising: “listening, reading and viewing, speaking, writing, and creating print, visual and audio materials” (ACARA, 2011b, p. 21). Together, the definitions positioned literacy as providing Australian students with skills and knowledge foundational to their
success as a learner, life as an Australian citizen and ability to contribute to enhancing Australia’s competitiveness in the global economy. Furthermore, *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum* (ACARA, 2011b) stated that “in the early years, priority is given to literacy … because these are the foundations on which further learning is built” (ACARA, 2011b, p. 16). Thus, literacy learning was to begin in the early years of schooling. This accorded ECEC a foundational role in learning, so emphasising education in ECEC.

The analysis of policy text production of *Investing in the Early Years* (COAG, 2009a) revealed various dominant themes, namely change, in the national interest and apparent broad consultation. Relevant to this investigation, the additional dominant theme ECEC is foundational was also revealed.

*Investing in the Early Years* (COAG, 2009a) established a rationale for change in ECEC in Australia through competitive and comparative discourses that negatively compared Australian outcomes in ECEC with that of outcomes in other countries. All of the actions and strategies subsequently described in *Investing in the Early Years* (COAG, 2009a) were to be on a national level: “The early years’ services need to be coordinated” (COAG, 2009a, p. 11). *Investing in the Early Years* (COAG, 2009a) was published by an intergovernmental forum, namely COAG. Operating at the Federal level in Australia, COAG included elected heads of government from the Federal, State and Territory levels (see Chapter Two). Listing COAG as the author implied engagement in apparent broad consultation processes during policy production that transcended government and political divisions, reflecting an underlying co-operative federalism discourse. This was reinforced when it was declared in the policy text that *Investing in the Early Years* (COAG, 2009a) represented a “collaborative effort between the Commonwealth [Federal] and
the State and Territory Governments” (COAG, 2009a, p. 4). This implied national agreement across Australia strengthened the power of the national policy elite to enforce change in ECEC. However, the voices of parents, teachers and students were not explicitly included; that is, they were omitted from policy text production in *Investing in the Early Years* (COAG, 2009a).

The word ‘investing’ in the title of *Investing in the Early Years* (COAG, 2009a) implied that time and money invested in ECEC could result in positive returns in the future. Reflective of an economic discourse, this positioned ECEC itself within an economic agenda, so reinforcing the importance accorded to ECEC at the national level. Accordingly, there was a vision statement stated in *Investing in the Early Years* (COAG, 2009a) that provided an objective of this ‘investment’, namely that “by 2020 all children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation” (COAG, 2009a, p. 13). The statement used competitive and comparative language, reflective of neoliberal ideology, in ‘best’ and ‘better’, together with a protective discourse in ‘children’, to add persuasive force to the implementation of action to achieve this vision. All this worked together in strengthening the foundational nature of ECEC for the child’s learning, life and ‘for the nation’.

There emerged a number of dominant themes in the analysis of the context of policy text production of the *EYLF* (DEEWR for COAG, 2009), namely change, in the national interest and apparent broad consultation. Relevant to this investigation, the dominant themes of literacy is foundational, with a contributory sub-theme of definitions of literacy, and ECEC is foundational, with a contributory sub-theme of education focus, were also revealed.
The *EYLF* (DEEWR for COAG, 2009), as the inaugural national curriculum for children aged from birth to five years of age, represented national change for ECEC in Australia. State and Territory level activities were not mentioned. Change, as represented by the *EYLF* (DEEWR for COAG, 2009), was to be national, and in the national interest. This was strengthened through the authorship of the *EYLF* (DEEWR for COAG, 2009); that is, COAG’s involvement was made explicit. This authorship implied policy makers’ engagement in apparent broad consultation processes during policy construction that transcended government and political divisions, reflecting an underlying co-operative federalism discourse. The voices of parents, teachers and students in policy text production were not explicitly included in the *EYLF* (DEEWR for COAG, 2009). It thus seemed that consultation, and apparent agreement, had remained at the level of government.

The *EYLF* (DEEWR for COAG, 2009) accorded literacy a foundational role in a young child’s learning. Literacy was described as “vital for successful learning across the curriculum” (DEEWR for COAG, 2009, p. 38). The words ‘learning across the curriculum’ emphasised the broad nature of literacy and the word ‘vital’ stressed the importance of literacy. In another paragraph on the same page, the word “essential” (DEEWR for COAG, 2009, p. 38), followed by directions that literacy foundations were to be “built in early childhood” (DEEWR for COAG, 2009, p. 38), reinforced the foundational role of literacy in learning in ECEC; that is, literacy could not be ignored by those teaching very young children. Later in the *EYLF* (DEEWR for COAG, 2009), literacy was defined as providing children with: “the capacity, confidence and disposition to use language in all its forms [in] a range of modes of communication including music, movement, dance, storytelling, visual
arts, media and drama, as well as talking, listening, viewing, reading and writing.” (DEEWR for COAG, 2009, p. 38).

Literacy was defined differently in the *EYLF* (DEEWR for COAG, 2009) than in *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum* (ACARA, 2011b). The *EYLF* (DEEWR for COAG, 2009) incorporated a wider range of ‘modes of communication’ in its definition that included dance, movement, music and drama. As a curriculum, the *EYLF* (DEEWR for COAG, 2009) was intended for children from birth to age five. It seemed that the inclusion of ‘modes of communication’, such as dance and movement, in the definition of literacy in the *EYLF* (DEEWR for COAG, 2009) allowed recognition that literacy was used by, and had the capacity to be developed in, even the very young. This strengthened the notion that literacy learning began well before formal schooling (see Chapter Three). This, in turn, created the impression that this period of a child’s life was a time for facilitating a child’s learning through a focus on education, as much as providing care.

The *EYLF* (DEEWR for COAG, 2009), as an ECEC curriculum, positioned ECEC itself as foundational to, and of strategic importance for, the child’s “future success in learning” (DEEWR for COAG, 2009, p. 5). The policy declared that “early childhood is a vital period in children’s learning and development” (DEEWR for COAG, 2009, p. 5). Here, the adjective ‘vital’, together with repetition of the word ‘learning’, reinforced the emphasis on education being placed on this stage of a child’s life. For the first time in Australia, the *EYLF* (DEEWR for COAG, 2009) represented a common curriculum for young children throughout Australia, regardless of whether they were located in before-school services or in-school services. This further emphasised the foundational role of education during the early years of a child’s life. This notion was strengthened when the *EYLF* (DEEWR for
COAG, 2009) named all practitioners, be they in before-school or in-school services, as ‘educators’.

Analysis of policy text production of the interview data revealed various dominant themes, namely change, in the national interest and apparent broad consultation with a contributory sub-theme of financial policy levers. Relevant to this investigation, the dominant themes of literacy is foundational, with a contributory sub-theme of definitions of literacy, and ECEC is foundational, with a contributory sub-theme of education focus, were also revealed.

One participant frequently began statements by naming the Australian Federal Government as the instigator of actions in the governance of education, using phrases such as “The Australian Federal Government Ministers decided” (A1) and declaring that the Australian Federal Government was pursuing “a national perspective” (A1) in education in Australia. These comments, reflective of a co-operative federalism discourse, revealed that educational change, managed by the Australian Federal Government, was to be on a national basis and in the national interest. Another participant, in discussing the national curriculum policy for ECEC, the EYLF (DEEWR for COAG, 2009), said: “Australian [national] curriculum is influencing State curriculum” (A3) in ECEC, with the word ‘influencing’ being indicative of the strength of the co-operative federalism discourse being used by the national policy elite to exert control over education in Australia. Another participant revealed possible conflict. The participant said: “I think the States will continue to hold onto that power” (A4), implying by the words ‘hold on’ that this control, and the underlying co-operative federalism discourse, was being contested by the States and Territories.
Interview data revealed that apparent broad consultation processes during policy production were, in reality, used by the national policy elite to exert control. For instance, one participant said that specific advice provided to ACARA during consultation processes by a reference group of relevant professionals was perceived as contradicting national policy intent regarding the national curriculum. According to this participant, ACARA: “Took a pretty hard line on that and ... re-imposed the intended emphasis” (A1), so silencing the voices of these stakeholders and maintaining control at the national level.

Participants revealed that financial policy levers, used over the States and Territories, were adding a coercive tone to the underlying co-operative federalism discourse. One participant explained: “Federal funding was made conditional upon the States [and Territories] implementing a programme that tested all children ... on literacy and numeracy [NAPLAN]” (A1). The word ‘conditional’ indicated the strength of the financial policy levers; they appeared to leave minimal room for debate or non-compliance. Another participant declared that: “The Commonwealth [Australian Federal Government] has been using a carrot and stick kind of approach” (A3), with the ‘carrot’ being the extra funding, and the ‘stick’ being the possibility of losing funding should performance indicators, namely desirable State level improvements in measurable outcomes in NAPLAN, not be achieved.

Participants accorded literacy with a foundational role in learning, particularly in relation to learning in ECEC. One participant said: “Development in literacy birth to age four or five, is a huge part of learning” (A2) while another participant commented: “Every teacher needs to regard themselves as a literacy teacher” (A4), with the word ‘every’ including those in ECEC. Participants believed that, as literacy was foundational to learning, it was important to clearly define
literacy through policy to, in turn, frame practice. For instance, one participant said: “It’s the policy makers’ and the bureaucrats’ … orientation towards literacy that is … fairly critical” (A3), the word ‘orientation’ implying definition and direction.

Participants identified tensions in achieving clear definition, and directions, in literacy. In the opinion of one participant, achieving clear and consistent definitions in policy was difficult as literacy was a “contested area” (A1), while other participants noted that ‘literacy’ encompassed so much that it was “too long a bow to draw” (A4) through policy and: “It’s big” (A2). According to another participant, the variances in definitions in written curriculum policy potentially could create conflict in literacy pedagogy as this participant explained: “You’ve [then] got all of the different … beliefs and assumptions about how it should be taught.” (A3).

Participants also commented upon how NAPLAN, the national testing regime, was impacting upon the definition of literacy and, in turn, literacy pedagogy. One participant commented: “Some schools … actually narrow literacy down and make it quite defined [according to that tested in NAPLAN]” (A2). The participant explained that these schools believed this would ensure improved outcomes in these tests. Another participant believed that the ‘narrowing’ of literacy meant important aspects of literacy would get ‘missed’ in teaching, such as speaking and listening and critical literacy, and concluded: “As a profession we need to make sure that the integrity of literacy remains” (A3).

Analysis of interview data revealed that some participants believed that changes in ECEC, which included a stronger emphasis on education, were desirable and necessary for improved outcomes to ensure ‘quality’ ECEC. One participant expressed the opinion that changes were required to bring more “rigour” (A4) and “sophisticated pedagogy” (A4) to allow for “intervention to optimise achievement in
outcomes” (A4) for ECEC students in schools, so emphasising education. The need for change in ECEC was similarly highlighted by another participant, but this participant believed that the focus needed to be on the “content of learning” (A2) rather than pedagogy. Some participants commented upon how national educational policy now included “maternal and child health workers” (A2) and “paraprofessionals [in ECEC]” (A3), along with teachers, as educators of young children. This strengthened the emphasis of education in ECEC at the national level.

Analysis of policy text production across both interview and documentary data revealed similar dominant themes, namely change, in the national interest and apparent broad consultation. However, interview data revealed a contributory sub-theme of financial policy levers in policy text production which rendered policy with a directive, and arguably almost a coercive, tone. Relevant to the study’s focii, analysis of documentary and interview data revealed the dominant themes of literacy is foundational, with the sub-theme definitions of literacy, and ECEC is foundational, with the contributory sub-theme education focus.

Concluding Discussion

This chapter has presented analysis of the broad policy processes found at the macro (national: Australian) level of the literacy policy trajectory under investigation in this study. It focused upon two contexts of the policy trajectory, namely that of influences and text production.

From analysis of the documentary and interview data, policy at the macro (national: Australian) level was found to be principally influenced by the desire to enhance Australia’s international competitiveness in the global economy, reflecting neoliberal ideology. Education had an important role to play and thus policy
represented a pursuit of improved educational outcomes, strengthened through the key goals of quality and equity. Participants also revealed these neoliberal influences, with many commenting about how NAPLAN, and the MySchool website, were being used as performance indicators for quality and equity.

Policy produced at the macro (national: Australian) level was thus found to constitute a national change agenda for Australian education. Strengthened by an underlying co-operative federalism discourse, financial policy levers, which participants revealed were being used over the States and Territories to reinforce compliance, arguably added a coercive tone. Despite apparent broad consultation processes in policy text production, analysis also revealed that many voices of other stakeholders, such as teachers, were omitted, and at times silenced. The Australian Federal Government was thus being accorded with power to exert control over education in Australia to change it towards the creation of a cohesive system of schooling across the nation.

Literacy was accorded a foundational role in the pursuit of improved outcomes to enhance Australia’s international competitiveness. The written policies analysed defined literacy broadly, the development of which was to begin in the early years. However, some participants suggested that the working definition of literacy may become narrowed, being impacted by the neoliberal competitive and performance discourses in which NAPLAN was embedded. This would place the definition of literacy in tension with broader definitions within written national curriculum policies.

Policy positioned ‘quality’ ECEC as having a foundational role in the pursuit of educational improvements to enhance the nation’s international competitive positioning. Policy heralded much change for ECEC in the pursuit of quality which
included a national curriculum to be implemented in the before-school as well as in-school sectors. This resulted in a greater emphasis on the provision of education, rather than care alone, in the early years of a child’s life.

This chapter has analysed the broad milieu of policy activity and intent within the macro (national: Australian) level of the literacy policy trajectory under investigation in this study. The following chapter will add to this milieu, focused upon the meso (State: Western Australian) level.
Chapter Seven

Findings from the Meso (State: Western Australian) Level of the Literacy Policy Trajectory: Focus on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the analysis of documentary and interview data collected at the meso (State: Western Australian (WA)) level of the literacy policy trajectory under investigation in this study. Details of the data sources, as well as collection and analysis procedures, are specified in Chapter Five.

Findings are presented in sections below, firstly from the documentary data collected at the meso (State: WA) level, and these are later triangulated with the interview data. Excerpts from the data are used to illustrate the findings. Where quotes from participants are used, these are referenced using a code that begins with (W), meaning ‘WA’.

Context of Policy Influences

This section presents the findings from analysis of the context of policy influences. Below is a table that summarises the themes and sub-themes identified in the documentary and interview data.
Table 7.1. Themes and Sub-Themes Identified in the Analysis of Context of Policy Influences at the Meso (State: WA) Level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Type</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Documentary</td>
<td>WA’s competitive positioning</td>
<td><em>The push for improved educational outcomes</em></td>
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<td><em>Quality and equity</em></td>
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<td><em>Accountability</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>WA’s competitive positioning</td>
<td><em>The push for improved educational outcomes</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td><em>Quality and equity</em></td>
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<td><em>Accountability</em></td>
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The *Director General’s Classroom First Strategy* (Department of Education (DoE) (WA), 2007), hereafter called *Classroom First*, was the first policy published by the then newly appointed Director General (DG) of the DoE (WA). The policy established a new direction for public education in the State of WA. Analysis of policy influences revealed a dominant theme, namely the push for improved educational outcomes, with two contributory sub-themes, these being quality and equity and accountability.

In *Classroom First* (DoE (WA), 2007), there was evidence early in the text of the pursuit of improved educational outcomes in WA’s public education system, with the key goals of quality and equity used to add credibility. For instance, the policy began with: “Our goal is a strong public school – a public school system that earns the respect of the community for the quality of the education it offers” (DoE (WA), 2007, p. 2). ‘Quality’ was embedded within social democratic discourses, with the words ‘earns respect of the community’ adding value and integrity to the
goal. A slogan followed and this elaborated upon how the goal was to be achieved: “If we work at making: every public school a good school, every teacher an effective teacher, every student a successful student” (DoE (WA), 2007, p. 2). The slogan read somewhat like a marketing discourse. Repetition of ‘every’ in the slogan emphasised inclusivity and access, which implied equity, while the words ‘effective’ and ‘successful’ implied quality, with this competitive discourse reflective of neoliberal underpinnings.

The rhetoric in Classroom First (DoE (WA), 2007) made it seem logical to measure improvements in outcomes, with this serving to rationalise accountability mechanisms presented in statements, such as: “Good schools are open and accountable … rigorous self assessments … targets for improvement” (DoE (WA), 2007, p. 3). Present and present progressive tenses, which implied that these accountability mechanisms were already in progress, added persuasive force, so making these measures unavoidable and incontestable.

The Plan for Public Schools 2008-2011 (Department of Education and Training (DET) (WA), 2008), hereafter referred to as the Plan for Public Schools, was the strategic plan for the public school education system in WA. The Plan for Public Schools (DET (WA), 2008) was a “statement of commitment” (DET (WA), 2008, p. 3) to strategies presented in Classroom First (DoE (WA), 2007). Analysis of policy influences in the Plan for Public Schools (DET (WA), 2008) revealed a dominant theme of concerns about WA’s competitive positioning, while the push for improved educational outcomes, quality and equity and accountability were contributory sub-themes.

The concerns about WA’s national, and international, competitive positioning framed the Plan for Public Schools (DET (WA), 2008). The policy opened with: “By
international standards our schools perform extremely well. This plan reflects our ambition to perform at an even higher standard.” (DET (WA), 2008, p. 3). The comparative and competitive language, in words such as ‘higher standard’, reflected the neoliberal ideology that underpinned this policy. The word ‘ambition’ added persuasive force to the goal.

The Plan for Public Schools (DET (WA), 2008) then detailed strategies to achieve six objectives, and improved educational outcomes. Within the strategies themselves, there were various statements that reflected the key goals of quality and equity used to rationalise the State policy elite’s quest for improvements in outcomes. For instance, in “Objective 3: To ensure every public school is a good school” (DET (WA), 2008, p. 9), the word ‘every’ highlighted inclusivity and access, and implied equity, and the word ‘good’ implied quality. Accountability mechanisms for improvements in outcomes were also established in these objectives. For instance, in “Objective 5: To deliver meaningful accountability” (DET (WA), 2008, p. 11), competitive and economic discourses, reflective of neoliberal values, were used to describe various measures through which schools would be made accountable for improvements in outcomes. These measures included “improvement targets” (DET (WA), 2008, p. 11) and “performance data” (DET (WA), 2008, p. 11) in relation to student outcomes, and “performance management processes” (DET (WA), 2008, p. 11) for staff.

The remaining two policy texts analysed, Progressing Classroom First (DoE (WA), 2011a) and The Early Years of Schooling: An Initiative of the Director General’s Classroom First Strategy (DoE (WA), 2011b), were published three to four years later. In the interim, a national literacy (and numeracy) testing regime, namely the National Assessment Program–Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), was
implemented in Australia with results published online through the MySchool website (https://www.myschool.edu.au/) (see Chapter Two). Analysis of policy influences of Progressing Classroom First (DoE (WA), 2011a) and The Early Years of Schooling: An Initiative of the Director General’s Classroom First Strategy (DoE (WA), 2011b) revealed in each the dominant theme of concerns about WA’s competitive positioning, with three contributory sub-themes, namely the push for improved educational outcomes, quality and equity and accountability.

*Progressing Classroom First* (DoE (WA), 2011a) began with: “By Year 3 our students are not doing as well as students in several other states” (DoE (WA), 2011a, p. 3) in NAPLAN, with this early reference to NAPLAN reflecting the dominating influential force of concern with WA’s national, and international, competitive positioning. The key goals of quality and equity became evident in *Progressing Classroom First* (DoE (WA), 2011a) when negative comparative language was used which implied students in public schools in WA were ‘failing’ in comparison to students in other Australian States and Territories. Later, an apparent inequity in these results within minority groups, such as Aboriginal students, was highlighted when results of this student population in WA were described as “lagging behind” (DoE (WA), 2011a, p. 3). These comparative and competitive discourses, which positioned NAPLAN as accountability for, and a performance indicator of, ‘quality’ and ‘equity’, were reflective of the dominant neoliberal values influencing policy at this level. Later in *Progressing Classroom First* (DoE (WA), 2011a), it was stated that NAPLAN was “important for every school to analyse and use” (DoE (WA), 2011a, p. 4), the word ‘important’ reflecting the strength of these policy influences.
The Early Years of Schooling: An Initiative of the Director General’s Classroom First Strategy (DoE (WA), 2011b), hereafter called The Early Years of Schooling, detailed strategies in pursuit of improvements within the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector of the WA public education system. An influential force on the policy was concerns with WA’s national, and international, competitive positioning. In The Early Years of Schooling (DoE (WA), 2011b), apparently ‘poor’ performances by WA students in NAPLAN, first administered in Year Three (when children turn eight), were used to justify pursuit of improvements in the ECEC years, these being prior to NAPLAN. The goal of the improvements was stated as: “to equal or exceed the best in Australia” (DoE (WA), 2011b, p. 2). The words ‘equal or exceed’ implied equity and quality, with the comparative and competitive discourses being reflective of the dominant neoliberal ideology that underpinned The Early Years of Schooling (DoE (WA), 2011b). Later, the policy declared the need to “raise our expectations” (DoE (WA), 2011b, p. 2) for performances in these ECEC years, with NAPLAN as the main accountability and performance indicator. This once again positioned quality within neoliberal discourses and was further reflection of the overriding concern with WA’s national, and international, positioning.

Analysis of policy influences of interview data revealed a dominant theme of concerns about WA’s competitive positioning, with three contributory sub-themes, namely the push for improved educational outcomes, quality and equity and accountability. For instance, one participant commented that policy at this level was about achieving: “improved outcomes ... the highest literacy outcomes that you can achieve for all children” (W11), such was the force of the influence of concerns about WA’s national, and international, competitive positioning. The statement also exemplified the key goals of equity and quality in the pursuit of improvements; the
superlative ‘highest’ implied quality within a competitiveness discourse, and ‘all’ implied equity in terms of access.

Participants frequently commented on the influential force of NAPLAN and the MySchool website, with these being seen as accountability for, and a performance indicator of, improvements to enhance the State’s positioning. One participant said: “Once NAPLAN got published online [reference to MySchool] we saw a whole shift and pressure ... to achieve improved NAPLAN results” (W2), while another participant commented: “All of that … in the public arena [MySchool] increases accountability” (W11). A further participant observed: “There’s always pressure to be getting better NAPLAN results” (W9) and another said: “We are all measured against NAPLAN. We feel the pressure. We’re accountable” (W6). Here, the word ‘pressure’, used by both of these participants, indicates tensions. One participant commented that: “NAPLAN is a driver of the system” (W11). A different participant said: “That’s [NAPLAN] certainly one of the things that drives the system” (W9) towards improvements. These comments revealed how accountability regimes, couched in neoliberal discourses of comparisons and competitiveness, positioned the national testing regime as ‘high stakes’ and highly visible accountability. This reflected the dominant neoliberal underpinnings influencing policy at this level.

Some participants identified additional tensions associated with the neoliberal values reflected in NAPLAN. One participant said: “NAPLAN is an easy form of saying how good a school is going but high stakes testing [is the] worst thing to ever come ... teachers’ view of their own professional judgments have been lowered” (W3) in deference to performance data. Another participant challenged the
validity of NAPLAN as a test, saying: “[NAPLAN] over-samples around the benchmark.” (W1).

Analysis of policy influences at the meso (State: WA) level identified a dominant theme across the documentary data; namely, concerns about WA’s competitive positioning. Three contributory sub-themes were identified, namely the push for improved educational outcomes, quality and equity and accountability. Quality and equity were each embedded within an assemblage of values that became more often reflective of dominant neoliberal ideology underpinning policy at this level. While the analysis of the interview data identified these themes as well, some tensions were revealed.

Context of Policy Text Production

This section presents the findings from the analysis in the context of policy text production. Below is a table that summarises the themes and sub-themes identified in the documentary and interview data.

In the WA public school system at the time of data collection, ECEC, defined as being for children from birth to eight years of age (see Chapter Three), included the non-compulsory years of Kindergarten and Pre-Primary with the compulsory years of Year One and Year Two (see Chapter Two).
Table 7.2. Themes and Sub-Themes Identified in the Analysis of Context of Policy Text Production at the Meso (State: WA) Level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Documentary data</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Change</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commanding policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literacy is important</td>
<td>Definitions of literacy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Accountability</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECEC is important</td>
<td>Education focus</td>
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<td>Pedagogical change</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Inclusion</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Interview data</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Commanding policy</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Financial policy levers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literacy is important</td>
<td>Definitions of literacy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Accountability</td>
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<td>ECEC is important</td>
<td>Education focus</td>
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<td>Pedagogical change</td>
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<td>Inclusion</td>
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The analysis of policy text production of *Classroom First* (DoE (WA), 2007) identified two dominant themes, namely **change** and **commanding policy**. Relevant to the specific areas of policy under investigation, the dominant theme of **literacy is important** was identified. There was minimal reference to ECEC.

In *Classroom First* (DoE (WA), 2007), statements, such as how this policy was “distinguished” (DoE (WA), 2007, p. 4) from previous policies, conveyed the notion of change; that is, this policy represented a new direction from a newly appointed DG in the pursuit of improvements. Change was to be “implemented using change management strategies” (DoE (WA), 2007, p. 2). This managerial discourse of ‘change management’ further reinforced the change agenda. Change was
presented positively, thereby adding credibility to the change agenda. For instance, a photograph on the title page of a teacher sitting amongst children, all looking at or pointing to stars, gave the impression that change would enable children and teachers in WA’s public school system to ‘reach for the stars’, this being somewhat inspirational.

In *Classroom First* (DoE (WA), 2007) change was directed in a commanding manner. There was no mention of consultative processes in policy text production. The full title, *Director General’s Classroom First Strategy*, together with the DG’s photograph on the inside page, gave the impression that the policy came direct from the DG, the head of the DoE (WA). This State Government department provides the funding for public schools. As the DG ‘signed off’ on this funding, the DG’s presence in the policy added strength to the policy’s commanding tone. In the statement: “It will be used as the framework for future decision making” (DoE (WA), 2007, p. 2), the verb ‘will’ reinforced the impression that there was minimal room for non-compliance by schools. Throughout the text, variances of the first person plural pronoun, such as ‘our’ and ‘we’, suggested inclusivity of, as well as putative acceptance of, the intent of this policy by all those who worked for DoE (WA). This accorded further power to the State policy elite.

In *Classroom First* (DoE (WA), 2007), literacy was ascribed an important role, being described as “fundamentally important” (DoE (WA), 2007, p. 3) in the State’s change agenda for improvements in outcomes in the public school system. There was no other definition or discussion of literacy.

The policy implied that ECEC was included in the scope of *Classroom First* (DoE (WA), 2007). There was a photograph of a young school-aged child, with an
adult looking at the child’s work over her shoulder. However, there was no explicit mention of the ECEC years.

Analysis of policy text production of *Plan for Public Schools* (DET (WA), 2008) revealed two dominant themes, namely change and commanding policy. Relevant to this investigation, the dominant theme of literacy is important was identified, with two contributory sub-themes of definitions of literacy and accountability. In addition, analysis revealed the dominant theme of ECEC is important, with a contributory sub-theme of education focus.

In the opening address, the *Plan for Public Schools* (DET (WA), 2008) declared itself as an “exciting agenda for improvement” (DET (WA), 2008, p. 3). The word ‘improvement’ heralded change which was positioned positively; that is, as ‘exciting’. Change was positioned as enhancing the State’s performances to “even higher standard” (DET (WA), 2008, p. 3), this comparative discourse being reflective of an underpinning neoliberal ideology in policy at this level.

*Plan for Public Schools* (DET (WA), 2008) was commanding in how it directed change. The commanding tone was established through the policy’s authorship, the leader of the DoE (WA), the DG. This was reinforced through the presence of the DG in the policy itself. For instance, the opening address, accompanied by a photograph of the DG, appeared to be a personal statement from the DG, signed by her. Statements throughout *Plan for Public Schools* (DET (WA), 2008) consolidated the policy’s commanding tone. For instance, numerous statements began with verbs such as “provide” (DET (WA), 2008, p. 11), making the statements imperatives. Present tense was used in statements of outcomes achieved from implemented strategies, such as “Staff are well treated” (DET (WA), 2008, p. 10), making these appear as already achieved by ‘good’ schools. There was no
mention of consultation during policy text production. The commanding nature of
*Plan for Public Schools* (DET (WA), 2008) was strengthened further through
repeated use of the first person plural pronouns ‘we’ and ‘our’, which implied unity
in, and acceptance of, the policy’s intent. There seemed minimal room for non-
compliance by schools. The State policy elite was subsequently accorded power to
exert control.

In *Plan for Public Schools* (DET (WA), 2008), literacy was positioned as
important. For instance, the policy stated that students in public schools in WA were
to “achieve the standards expected of them at particular years of schooling with a
focus on literacy” (DET (WA), 2008, p. 6). The words ‘focus on literacy’
highlighted the importance of literacy. The definition of literacy, and accountability
for improvements, was then dominantly framed in *Plan for Public Schools* (DET
(WA), 2008) by the national testing regime, namely NAPLAN. Schools were to
ensure: “targeted support and personalised learning programmes for those students
not reaching the national literacy … benchmarks” (DET (WA), 2008, p. 7).
NAPLAN was administered at ‘particular years of schooling’, namely Years Three,
Five, Seven and Nine, and provided ‘standards’ or ‘benchmarks’ in literacy against
which to judge students’ performances. *Plan for Public Schools* (DET (WA), 2008)
contained no other definition or explanation of literacy. Aspects of literacy not
assessed by NAPLAN, such as speaking and listening, critical or digital literacy (see
Chapter Three) received no explicit mention. This implied that these aspects of
literacy were less important, thus less worthy of being taught. The definition of
literacy was restricted to those aspects assessed by NAPLAN, and NAPLAN was the
main accountability and performance indicator for literacy improvements.
In the *Plan for Public Schools* (DET (WA), 2008), ECEC was explicitly positioned as a time for “developing basic skills for life and learning” (DET (WA), 2008, p. 6). This highlighted ECEC as having an important role in the State’s change agenda for improved outcomes in public schools. One of the strategies detailed in *Plan for Public Schools* (DET (WA), 2008) was to “screen all children on entry to school to determine their readiness for learning” (DET (WA), 2008, p. 6). The phrase ‘readiness for learning’ emphasised education over care in the ECEC years in the public school system of WA.

Analysis of policy text production of *Progressing Classroom First* (DoE (WA), 2011a) revealed two dominant themes, namely change and commanding policy. Relevant to this investigation, the themes of literacy is important, with two contributory sub-themes of definitions of literacy and accountability, and ECEC is important, with contributory sub-themes of education focus, pedagogical change and inclusion, were also identified as dominant.

*Progressing Classroom First* (DoE (WA), 2011a) outlined apparent progress that had been made in the public school system in WA during the four years since *Classroom First* (DoE (WA), 2007). However, *Progressing Classroom First* (DoE (WA), 2011a) heralded further change, stating: “We need to do more” (DoE (WA), 2011a, p. 2). This was followed by description of numerous strategies aimed to achieve ‘more’. The language used in *Progressing Classroom First* (DoE (WA), 2011a) was commanding; compliance by those working in the public school system in WA seemed non-negotiable and obligatory. For instance, the use of third person pronoun ‘we’ throughout established unity in intent, and putative consent, by all working in WA’s public school system. In statements that described strategies, there was frequent repetition of the modal verb ‘will’, as in “will be re-shaped” (DoE
This added to the commanding tone of Progressing Classroom First (DoE (WA), 2011a). Similar to previous policies, the commanding tone of Progressing Classroom First (DoE (WA), 2011a) was further strengthened by its authorship, being the DG of DoE (WA).

Early in Progressing Classroom First (DoE (WA), 2011a), literacy was positioned as an important area of focus. The policy highlighted that students in WA were ‘failing’ in literacy. By Year Three, the first year when students completed NAPLAN assessments, students in WA were described in Progressing Classroom First (DoE (WA), 2011a) as “not doing as well as students in several other states” (DoE (WA), 2011a, p. 3). Thus, it seemed logical that there must be improvements in literacy outcomes to “match” (DoE (WA), 2011a, p. 3) NAPLAN performances with the “best in Australia” (DoE (WA), 2011a, p. 3). This comparative discourse reflected the underlying neoliberal ideology of Progressing Classroom First (DoE (WA), 2011a). The definition of literacy, and accountability for improvements in literacy, was framed by NAPLAN in Progressing Classroom First (DoE (WA), 2011a). The policy contained no other definition or explanation of literacy. As NAPLAN assessed specific aspects of reading, writing, spelling and grammar, other aspects of literacy such as visual, critical or digital literacy (see Chapter Three), were omitted from the definition of literacy in this policy.

Furthermore, Progressing Classroom First (DoE (WA), 2011a) used the aforementioned perceived ‘poor’ performance in literacy in NAPLAN of WA Year Three students as part of the rationale for change in the ECEC years in schools, these being prior to NAPLAN. The assumption seemed to be that changes in the ECEC years in schools would result in improved performances when these children were assessed through NAPLAN. This provided the ECEC years with an important role in
the State policy elite’s change agenda. Change was positioned to occur in the
teaching practices found in ECEC. The policy used the findings from a study
completed in WA of teaching practices in Kindergarten, Pre-Primary and Year One
(Tayler, 2010) to form part of the rationalisation for change. It was reported that the
study had found inconsistent pedagogy being used by ECEC teachers. The
implication was that inconsistency in pedagogy, or teaching practices, across the
ECEC years of school had contributed to the aforementioned poor performances in
NAPLAN (see Chapter Two). Thus, Progressing Classroom First (DoE (WA),
2011a) called for schools to “intervene as early as possible” (DoE (WA), 2011a, p.
5); that is, in the ECEC years. Through the rhetoric that surrounded this statement,
‘intervention’ was to bring consistent pedagogy in the ECEC years and explicitly
include ECEC in each school’s plans for improvements in literacy. Overall,
Progressing Classroom First (DoE (WA), 2011a) positioned education as important,
rather than care, in the ECEC years.

Analysis of policy text production of The Early Years of Schooling (DoE
(WA), 2011b) revealed two dominant themes, namely change and commanding
policy. Relevant to this investigation, analysis identified the dominant themes of
literacy is important, with two contributory sub-themes of definitions of literacy
and accountability, and ECEC is important, with contributory sub-themes of
education focus, pedagogical change and inclusion.

The Early Years of Schooling (DoE (WA), 2011b) heralded change for ECEC
in WA public schools: “We need to re-examine our approach in the early years of
school” (DoE (WA), 2011b, p. 2). The modal verb ‘need’ positioned the re-
examination as an imperative. The remainder of the policy prescribed various
changes for implementation in the overall pursuit of improved outcomes.
Throughout *The Early Years of Schooling* (DoE (WA), 2011b), present tense statements, and inclusion of words and phrases such as “expectations” (DoE (WA), 2011b, p. 2) and “we expect” (DoE (WA), 2011b, p. 3), reinforced the overall commanding nature of this policy. The third person pronoun ‘we’ implied consent, and unity of intent, by all those working for DoE (WA), so further demanding compliance. The overall commanding tone of *The Early Years of Schooling* (DoE (WA), 2011b) gave minimal room for non-compliance by schools.

In *The Early Years of Schooling* (DoE (WA), 2011b), definition of, and accountability for improvements in, literacy was framed by NAPLAN. Competitive and comparative discourses, which reflected neoliberal ideology, were used when the policy stated that by Year Three, the first year when students completed the NAPLAN assessment, students in WA were “not doing as well as students in several other states” (DoE (WA), 2011b, p. 2) in literacy. Interestingly, this was almost an exact repetition of a statement in *Progressing Classroom First* (DoE (WA), 2011a). This added credibility and strength in *The Early Years of Schooling* (DoE (WA), 2011b) to the goal that followed: that is, to improve literacy to “equal or exceed” (DoE (WA), 2011b, p. 2) NAPLAN performances with the “best in Australia” (DoE (WA), 2011b, p. 2). This statement, being in *The Early Years of Schooling* (DoE (WA), 2011b), was in a policy directly relevant to the ECEC years of school, so positioning strategies to achieve improvements in literacy outcomes in NAPLAN to begin in the ECEC years, before these students engaged in NAPLAN. The perception that improvements in the ECEC years will yield improvements in later years was reinforced when it was stated in *The Early Years of Schooling* (DoE (WA), 2011b) that ECEC provided the “building blocks for student success in the later years” (DoE (WA), 2011b, p. 4). There was no other definition or explanation.
of literacy in *The Early Years of Schooling* (DoE (WA), 2011b). The framing of the definition of literacy with NAPLAN in *The Early Years of Schooling* (DoE (WA), 2011b) was in tension with the broader definitions of literacy found in the national ECEC curriculum policy, namely *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) for the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2009), hereafter called *The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)*. In the *EYLF* (DEEWR for COAG, 2009), the definition of literacy included aspects such as speaking, listening and even dance.

The publication of *The Early Years of Schooling* (DoE (WA), 2011b), as the inaugural ECEC policy published by DoE (WA), was indicative in itself of the strength of the importance being placed on education in the ECEC years in schools in the State policy elite’s change agenda. The full title of the policy, *The Early Years of Schooling: An Initiative of the Director General’s Classroom First Strategy*, explicitly aligned this policy with the previous policy, namely *Classroom First* (DoE (WA), 2007). This implied that *The Early Years of Schooling* (DoE (WA), 2011b) came directly from the DG, with this emphasised by the inclusion of her photograph and a statement of policy intent from her: “I trust it [the policy] will make a contribution to the delivery of high quality educational opportunities to children in the critical first years of school” (DoE (WA), 2011b, p. 2). The use of the pronoun ‘I’ reinforced this as an appeal directly from the DG, with the emotive word ‘trust’ adding strength. The adjective ‘critical’ reinforced the need for ‘quality’ in the ECEC years, these being the ‘first years of school’. The notion of the foundational, and important, nature of the ECEC years was strengthened when they were described
As the ECEC years were deemed to be so important, *The Early Years of Schooling* (DoE (WA), 2011b) called for unity within, and inclusion of, these years in the school. The use of the word ‘schooling’ in the phrase in the title “the early years of schooling” [emphasis added]”, together with the statement: “It is important that schools … plan for programme cohesion and continuity across the early years of schooling” (DoE (WA), 2011b, p. 2), reinforced the pursuit of unity through *The Early Years of Schooling* (DoE (WA), 2011b) within the ECEC years, and the inclusion of the ECEC years within the whole school.

*The Early Years of Schooling* (DoE (WA), 2011b) specifically directed pedagogical change within ECEC to ensure “high quality educational opportunities” (DoE (WA), 2011b, p. 2), and improved performances in NAPLAN. This reinforced the emphasis placed on education in the ECEC years of schooling by the State policy elite. Change was positioned in *The Early Years of Schooling* (DoE (WA), 2011b) to be a move away from implementing predominantly traditional play-based pedagogy (see Chapter Three) to the inclusion of a “range of pedagogies” (DoE (WA), 2011b, p. 3). Photographs in *The Early Years of Schooling* (DoE (WA), 2011b) demonstrated how change, and this ‘range’, could be achieved. For instance, the photograph on the front page depicted a young smiling child who was seated on the floor in front of a magnetic board with letters. This seating arrangement implied a degree of informality, which could be perceived as a form of ‘play’, in a setting that demonstrated explicit teaching of letters.

Analysis of policy text production of interview data revealed a dominant theme, namely commanding policy, with two contributory sub-themes of
accountability and financial policy levers. Relevant to this investigation, the theme of literacy is important, with two contributory sub-themes of definitions of literacy and accountability, and ECEC is important, with contributory sub-themes of education focus, pedagogical change and inclusion were also identified.

Participants made numerous comments that indicated that policy at the meso (State: WA) level was commanding. One participant called policies at this level: “statutory documents” (W10), with these words according them a legislative status, such was the strength of their commanding force. The participant explained further: “As public servants employed within the schooling system” (W10), there was an obligation to comply” (W10) with these policies. Synonyms for ‘obligation’ are ‘duty’ and ‘compulsion’, and a synonym for ‘comply’ is ‘obey’. To this participant, these policies could not be ignored. Another participant said: “Documents should be influencing and shaping ... [Schools just need to be] looking at what does policy say and ... operate within them” (W9) and a different participant similarly commented: “Policies have to be aligned with ... the strategic plans from the central ministry [DoE (WA)]” (W4). Verbs such as ‘should’ and ‘have’ reinforced the commanding tone of policy at the meso (State: WA) level; that is, they ‘have to’ or ‘should be’ adhered to. Other participants commented similarly. For instance, one said schools need to, “link to the major documents” (W11) to work within the “system agenda” (W11), the ‘system’ being the public school system as governed by DoE (WA).

Another participant repeated some of the commanding language of the written policies in describing policy as: “What we [DoE (WA)] want ... what we expect’ (W8).

Interview data revealed how the commanding nature of policy at the meso (State: WA) level was being used to steer schools in certain directions, with this
reinforced through various mechanisms associated with NAPLAN. One participant explained: “The responsibility for making things happen rests with the school... [DoE (WA)] provide some really clear policy parameters for schools to work within, foregrounding for schools that you are responsible for the [NAPLAN] outcomes you achieve” (W10), with the words ‘responsible for’ and ‘responsibility’ synonymous with ‘accountability’. Schools were thus being commanded to change in particular ways in the pursuit of improvements, with persuasive force added through accountability regimes. Another participant revealed how financial policy levers added further strength to the commanding nature of these policies: “You [schools] need to improve [in NAPLAN] in order to get the next lot of money” (W11), describing the impact of these as a “pressurised picture that once was not there” (W11).

Participants ascribed literacy with an important role in students’ overall learning. As one participant explained: “Literacy is a gateway thing ... It’s forming the young person as a successful learner,” (W1) while another emphasised that: “Literacy is the starting point for all learning” (W3). In defining literacy, participants recognised the need for breadth. One participant stated that: “You need a broad view” (W4) and another described literacy as: “much broader than just English” (W11). Participants said that there were “many different literacies” (W4) or “all kinds of literacies” (W1); literacy was “convoluted” (W6). Two participants explicitly mentioned the need to teach “critical literacy” (W4, W10). Thus, participants recognised that literacy needed to be broad in definition. Participants also agreed that, because of literacy’s key role in the change agenda for improvements, it was important to measure it. For instance, one participant commented: “I think it’s important for us to have a measure” (W2).
However, many participants identified tension and conflict in how literacy improvements were being measured in educational policy at the meso (State: WA) level, making many specific references to how NAPLAN was framing the working definition of literacy, and teaching. For instance, one participant said: "We need to make sure that the dimensions of literacy are all taught ... it needs to be more than NAPLAN. There are some really important parts of literacy that never ever get touched by NAPLAN" (W10). Another said: "NAPLAN ... only focuses on that little bit of literacy" (W2) and another observed: "If you focus too narrowly on NAPLAN [it will be] to the cost of the kids [as] you’re not going to produce the high level literacy skills" (W4), as these are not assessed by NAPLAN. One participant reflected:

You must give kids practice [with NAPLAN style testing] but if you think you can replace the [literacy] curriculum with practice then you’re wrong ... people are over-focusing on thinking that if you practise the test, you’ll improve the performance. You just need to keep teaching the kids to improve their fluency, their vocabulary, their oral language and their comprehension and NAPLAN [scores] will rise if you do all those things. (W1).

Interview data revealed the important role being accorded to a focus on education in the ECEC years in the pursuit of improvements in literacy in NAPLAN. For instance, one participant said: “There’s a great emphasis [in policy] on getting the foundations right” (W8). Another commented: “From the department’s [DoE (WA)] point of view, it certainly would be good [to] see improved early childhood
results as measured by Year Three NAPLAN” (W9), here providing evidence of the perception that a focus on education, and improvements, in the ECEC years of school will yield better results in tests in later years. Some participants indicated tensions concerning the impact of NAPLAN on the ECEC years. One participant declared that NAPLAN results were “Rammed down our throats” (W5) and this resulted in a “push down” (W5) of content to be taught in the ECEC years in schools to achieve desirable performances. NAPLAN results, noted another participant, created “pressure” (W6) on teachers in the ECEC years to, as expressed by other participants, “push the kids” (W7) or “formalise literacy” (W2). The implication was that ‘formalising’ meant change from traditional play-based pedagogy to explicitly teach content, with the latter positioned to yield better test results. Another participant said: “NAPLAN has forced” (W3) change in the ECEC years in the pursuit of improved NAPLAN results. The participant explained that change needed to be in pedagogy: “If you want to make a difference [to results] ... there is one sure way to do it and that’s in pedagogy” (W3). Other participants described pedagogical change in various ways, using language that emphasised education, rather than care. For instance, one participant said that there was a: “move to intentional teaching” (W3), while another described: “specific instruction ... targeting instruction to the individual” (W1) and another participant said: “We need to explicitly teach kids” (W8).

Participants revealed tensions around these pedagogical changes. One expressed the opinion that such changes in the ECEC years were de-emphasising traditional play-based ECEC pedagogy, particularly in Kindergarten and Pre-Primary. The participant said: “I think there are a lot of very poor practices ... that are not appropriate for early childhood, like drills and skills. We need to maintain
that strong play focus” (W4). However, in suggesting that teachers adopt a combination of pedagogies, another participant said: “There’s no sense that play is not a good thing, there’s not a choice [between pedagogies]” (W1) in the ECEC years in schools. This was supported by the comments from other participants. One suggested: “Do that intentional teaching with still play-based structures” (W2). Another suggested that a pedagogy that was “play with learning” (W11) would allow focus on education but in appropriate ways for children in these years.

Participants expressed the belief that the inclusion of the ECEC years in whole school planning was required to achieve improvements in outcomes. One participant said that planning was required from “Kindergarten to ... Year Six” (W10). Another said that planning in the ECEC years needed to be “part of that whole school planning” (W2), further explaining: “Early childhood will be half the school community ... and it should impact on everything they [schools] do” (W2).

However, participants’ comments indicated potential tensions and conflict in the pursuit of inclusion. Some participants referred to how divisions between the non-compulsory years and remainder of the ECEC years in schools hindered inclusion. For instance, one participant said, with particular reference to these non-compulsory years: “It’s hard because they [Kindergarten and Pre-Primary teachers] want to belong to the whole school but ... there is conflict” (W7). The participant believed that these teachers themselves needed to change, saying: “They don’t want to become more part of the school” (W7) concluding: “It is a bit difficult [to achieve unity]” (W7).

Some participants commented on how the production of two national curriculum policy texts, namely the Australian Curriculum: Version 2.0 (ACARA, 2011a) for Foundation (called Pre-Primary in WA) to Year 12, and the EYLF
(DEEWR for COAG, 2009) for children aged birth to five years of age, was perpetuating divisions within these non-compulsory years in policy text production at the State level. For instance, one participant described the *Australian Curriculum: Version 2.0* (ACARA, 2011a) as the “real curriculum” (W5) for Pre-Primary, describing the *EYLF* (DEEWR for COAG, 2009) as applicable for children in Kindergarten only. However, this was in contrast to another participant who said: “*Certainly the message [in policy] is that the EYLF is a document for the early years Kindergarten to Two*” (W2).

Analysis of policy text production of the documentary data collected at the meso (State: WA) level revealed two dominant themes, namely *change* and *commanding policy*. Interview data paralleled documentary data in revealing the theme of *commanding policy*, while also identifying two contributory sub-themes of *accountability* and *financial policy levers*. Relevant to this investigation, both the documentary and interview data revealed the dominant themes of *literacy is important*, with contributory sub-themes of *definitions of literacy* and *accountability*, and *ECEC is important*, with contributory sub-themes of *education focus, pedagogical change* and *inclusion*.

**Concluding Discussion**

This chapter has presented analysis of the broad policy processes at the meso (State: WA) level of the literacy policy trajectory under investigation in this study. It focused upon two contexts of the policy trajectory, namely that of influences and policy text production. The analysis of data at the meso (State: WA) level found that policy at this level was principally influenced by concerns with WA’s national, and international,
competitive positioning, this reflecting underpinning neoliberal ideology. Policy advocated pursuit for improved educational outcomes in WA, the location of this study. The key goals of quality and equity and the positioning of NAPLAN as the main accountability, and performance indicator, for improvements added persuasive force. However, participants’ comments exposed tensions about NAPLAN, which was viewed by participants as ‘high stakes’ and highly visible accountability.

Policy produced at the meso (State: WA) level was found to constitute a change agenda to achieve improvements. The commanding and authoritative nature of policy was reinforced in the authorship and language features of written policy and enforced through accountability mechanisms. Participants revealed that financial policy levers further strengthened the commanding nature of policy. It seemed that employees of the public school system of WA had little alternative but to comply with policy and accept the control and power being exerted by the State policy elite.

Literacy was accorded an important role, with improvements to be measured, and teachers made accountable for them, through performance indicators in NAPLAN. Thus, the working definition of literacy was becoming increasingly framed by NAPLAN in policy at the meso (State: WA) level. This was in tension with broader definitions found in written national curriculum policy.

Policy deemed that improvements in literacy outcomes in NAPLAN needed to begin with change, and subsequent improvements, within the ECEC years in schools. Policy called for explicit inclusion of the entire ECEC sector in schools, Kindergarten to Year Two, in whole school planning for improvements in outcomes. Policy also advocated a range of pedagogies be adopted in the ECEC years in schools, with this perceived by participants to create less emphasis on traditional
play-based pedagogy. These changes were positioned to emphasise education over care in the ECEC years.

This chapter has analysed the broad milieu of policy activity and intent within the meso (State: WA) level of the policy trajectory under investigation in this study. The following three chapters each present results of analysis from the micro (local: school) level. Case studies detail how ECEC teachers, within the context of each school, engaged in school literacy policy processes.
Chapter Eight

Findings from Micro (Local: School) Level of the School Literacy Policy

Trajectory: Focus on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC):

Rural District High School

This study aimed to investigate the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on early childhood education and care (ECEC) teachers. The study was located in selected public schools in the State of Western Australia (WA).

The next three chapters present the findings at the micro (local: school) level of the literacy policy trajectory investigated, with each presenting a case study of a school. The three chapters are thus structured similarly, as summarised below:
The Format of Chapters Eight to Ten

Chapters Eight to Ten present the findings from analysis at the micro (local: school) level of the literacy policy trajectory under investigation in this study through three case study schools. At the time of data collection, in late 2012, the ECEC years in schools in WA comprised of non-compulsory years of Kindergarten and Pre-Primary and compulsory years of Year One and Year Two.

All schools, the names of which are pseudonyms, are located in the public school system of WA. Each chapter begins with describing the school’s setting, using a typology of contextual domains provided by Braun, Ball, Maguire and Hoskins (2011); namely “situated context” (Braun et al., 2011, p. 588), such as location, “material context” (Braun et al., 2011, p. 588), such as the staffing profile, “professional context” (Braun et al., 2011, p. 588), such as policy management processes, and “external context” (Braun et al., 2011, p. 588), such as external testing regimes. The findings are then presented in sections according to four contexts of the policy trajectory, namely those of influences, text production, practices (enactment) and outcomes.

In Chapters Eight to Ten, findings are presented in each section firstly from documentary data, and later triangulated with interview data. Findings are grouped around themes, which are bolded, and sub-themes, which are italicised and bolded. When excerpts from the data are used to illustrate the findings, these are referenced according to their respective sources (see details in Chapter Five).
**Introduction to Chapter Eight**

This chapter presents findings from the analysis of documentary and interview data collected at the micro (local: school) level of the literacy policy trajectory under investigation in this study in one of the case study schools, namely Rural District High School (RDHS). Data sources, collection and analysis procedures at the micro (local: school) level are detailed in Chapter Five. Quotes from participants used to illustrate the findings are referenced using a code that begins with (SR), meaning ‘school – RDHS’.

**The Setting of RDHS**

This section describes the setting of RDHS at the time of data collection, being late 2012, using the typology provided by Braun, Ball, Maguire and Hoskins (2011).

**Situated context.** RDHS is a remote public school located in ‘Rural’, a small town in Western Australia (WA). Open since early in the twentieth century, RDHS, as a district high school, provides public school education for primary and secondary school students who live in Rural and the surrounding area. Many students travel lengthy distances to attend school.

RDHS has approximately 200 students enrolled in Kindergarten to Year 12. The primary school, being Kindergarten to Year Seven, constitutes approximately two thirds of the total student population.

**Material context.** RDHS has less than 20 full time equivalent primary and secondary teaching staff members appointed by the Department of Education (DoE) (WA). The school’s remote location makes it difficult to attract and retain
experienced teaching staff. The majority of the teachers at RDHS are thus new graduates who tend to stay at the school for two to three years. There is a small group of long term employed teachers who are residents of the town’s farming community.

The school’s leadership team consists of a Principal and two Deputies, each of whom has small teaching loads. Committees, such as the Literacy Committee, have representation from both the secondary and primary school at RDHS.

The school’s buildings house the secondary and compulsory years of primary schools on one site. The non-compulsory years of Kindergarten and Pre-Primary are located across the road from the main school site. Teachers in these years of schooling have daily access to the main school site when leaders release them from lunch time duties. Teachers facilitate contact with the main school for their students in these non-compulsory years through regular visits and attendance at events, such as assemblies.

RDHS, as a public school, receives its funding from the DoE (WA). RDHS receives additional funding through the Australian Federal Government funded Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project. Funding from the Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project is provided to effect improvements in students’ literacy and numeracy results, as measured in the National Assessment Program–Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) (see Chapter Two). At RDHS, funds from the Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project are used by the school’s literacy leadership team to access professional development and to release one member of this team from classroom duties for literacy leadership.

Professional context. The literacy leadership team comprises the School Leader (SR3) and Teacher Leader (SR2) and each has been at the school for over ten years.
years. They manage the school’s literacy policy with minimal involvement by other staff. RDHS has a relatively small staff and few have the time for leadership roles. Most of the staff, being new graduate teachers, do not have expertise or experience in policy management.

The Literacy Committee at RDHS do not have direct involvement with literacy policy management. Instead, the principal role of this committee is to coordinate the purchase of physical resources used by individual teachers in their literacy teaching.

**External context.** RDHS is governed by the policies of the DoE (WA). Hard copies of the department’s policies are displayed on a noticeboard next to the School Leader’s (SR3) desk.

Like all schools in Australia, the school is required to administer the annual national testing regime, NAPLAN. Results were used in determining the school’s eligibility for funding through the Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project. The school’s results are publicly available online through the *MySchool* website ([https://www.myschool.edu.au/](https://www.myschool.edu.au/)) (see Chapter Two) but leaders reported that very few parents at RDHS accessed these results.

RDHS is in the early stages of implementing two national curriculum policies. The *Australian Curriculum: Version 2.0* (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2011a), a national curriculum for students from Foundation to Year 10, is beginning to be implemented Pre-Primary to Year 10. *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) for the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2009), hereafter called *The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)*, is the national curriculum for
children from birth to five. It was reported by participants as used in planning by Kindergarten and Pre-Primary teachers.

Staff at RDHS access some professional learning from the metropolitan based office of DoE (WA). For instance, staff recently attended professional development provided by the Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project management team. Staff more frequently access professional learning and support locally. Teachers make regular visits to other schools in the region for meetings, such as for the regional ECEC network, and workshops. Teachers also access support locally from various agencies external to DoE (WA) in the development and implementation of teaching plans for individual students, and these include Community Health personnel such as a Speech Pathologist.

**Context of Policy Influences**

This section presents the findings from analysis of the context of policy influences. Below is a table that summarises the themes and sub-themes identified in the documentary and interview data from this case study, namely RDHS.

Table 8.1. Themes and Sub-Themes Identified in the Analysis of Context of Policy Influences at the Micro (Local: School) Level (RDHS).

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<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
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<td>Documentary data</td>
<td>School’s competitive positioning</td>
<td>The push for improved educational outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview data</td>
<td>School’s competitive positioning</td>
<td>The push for improved educational outcomes</td>
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Written documentation that articulated the school literacy policy at RDHS comprised *Rural District High School (RDHS) Whole School Literacy Plan* (RDHS, 2010) and *Rural District High School (RDHS) Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project School Plan* (RDHS, 2012). Analysis of policy influences in the *RDHS Whole School Literacy Plan* (RDHS, 2010) revealed a dominant theme, namely the **push for improved educational outcomes**. The document predominantly presented strategies aimed at improving students’ literacy. Improvements were to be measured using school-based assessments, such as locally developed sight words tests.

Analysis of policy influences in the *RDHS Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project School Plan* (RDHS, 2012) revealed a dominant theme, namely concerns about the school’s **competitive positioning**, with the **push for improved educational outcomes** as a contributory sub-theme. In this document, NAPLAN was positioned as providing the school with measures of improvements in literacy, and competitiveness. This highlighted the school’s overriding concern with their positioning, as measured through this national testing regime; that is, performances, and competitiveness, needed to improve. “Improvement targets” (RDHS, 2012, p. 2), using NAPLAN as the performance indicator, were placed prominently early in the text. For instance, one target stated that by “Year 3, Reading is to be better than like schools in the top two proficiency bands (5 & 6)” (RDHS, 2012, p. 2). ‘Proficiency bands’ was a direct reference to NAPLAN indicators. Comparative and competitive discourses, evident in words such as ‘better than’, characterised the remaining ‘improvement targets’, this being further indication of the dominant neoliberal ideology underpinning this policy.

In the *RDHS Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project School Plan* (RDHS, 2012), concerns about the school’s competitive positioning were influencing
policy for the ECEC years in the school. The DoE (WA) mandated administration of the On-Entry Assessment Program in Pre-Primary (see Chapter 2, Background). In the *RDHS Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project School Plan*, (RDHS, 2012) the programme was called “the On-Entry diagnostic tool” (RDHS, 2012, p. 4), the word ‘diagnostic’ inferring the use of the assessment to identify problems. This was reinforced when later in the text, the policy stated that results were to be used to “identify students for whom a specific case-management plan is required” (RDHS, 2012, p. 4) to facilitate these students’ literacy learning towards more competitive NAPLAN performances in literacy in Year Three.

Analysis of policy influences of interview data revealed a dominant theme, namely concerns about the **school’s competitive positioning** with push for **improved educational outcomes** as a contributory sub-theme. One participant, a member of the literacy leadership team, said: “*We’ve got to keep up with everyone else*” (SR2); that is, improve, so as not to ‘fall behind’ in their positioning. The participant continued: “*It all stems from NAPLAN*” (SR2), this being further reflection of the school’s overriding concern with their competitiveness, with NAPLAN seen as the main performance indicator.

Interview data revealed that these competitive neoliberal influences were including the ECEC years in the school. A participant declared: “*Everyone’s responsible*” (SR3) for the school’s literacy results. The word ‘everyone’ included all teachers at RDHS as having a role in the school’s pursuit of desirable results, including those teachers in the years prior to NAPLAN testing.

From the analysis of policy influences evident in the documentary data at RDHS, there was a shift between the *RDHS Whole School Literacy Plan* (RDHS, 2010) and *RDHS Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project School Plan* (RDHS, 2012).
By the later published document, there emerged a dominant theme of policy influences, namely concerns about the school’s competitive positioning, with the push for improved educational outcomes constituting a contributory sub-theme.

With this shift came increasing reliance on NAPLAN as the main performance indicator of literacy improvements. The subsequent, and more frequent, competitive and measurement discourses in policy reflected the growing dominance of neoliberal ideology underpinning literacy policy at RDHS. The interview data paralleled these findings.

Context of Policy Text Production

This section presents the findings from analysis of the context of policy text production. Below is a table that summarises the themes and sub-themes identified in the documentary and interview data from this case study, namely RDHS.
Table 8.2. Themes and Sub-Themes Identified in the Analysis of Context of Policy Text Production at the Micro (Local: School) Level (RDHS).

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<td>Commanding policy</td>
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<td>Definitions of literacy</td>
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<td>ECEC is important</td>
<td>Education focus</td>
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<td>Interview data</td>
<td>Commanding policy</td>
<td>Staffing profile</td>
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<td>Disjointed policy</td>
<td>Financial policy levers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ECEC is important</td>
<td>Education focus</td>
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Analysis of policy text production in the *RDHS Whole School Literacy Plan* (RDHS, 2010) revealed dominant themes of **commanding policy** and, of particular relevance to this investigation, **definitions of literacy**. ECEC received minimal attention in this document.

The *RDHS Whole School Literacy Plan* (RDHS, 2010) was written by the School Leader (SR3), with two Year Seven Teachers, following their participation in workshops conducted by the WA Primary Principals’ Association. The policy was thus produced by leaders, with advice provided by experts from a professional organisation. This established the policy’s authority which contributed to making the policy commanding. Task-oriented discourses, evident in lists and dot point formats, reinforced the directive tone. Photographs of students’ completed work in each section of the policy, and use of present tense statements, gave the impression that these strategies were already in place. There seemed minimal room for negotiation or non-compliance by teachers.
Literacy was defined on the cover page of *RDHS Whole School Literacy Plan* (RDHS, 2010): “reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing”. This definition framed the remainder of the policy. Strategies to teach literacy were presented in the body of the text in sections of similar titles. Other aspects of literacy, such as digital, critical and multimodal literacy, were omitted.

Attention to the ECEC years in the *RDHS Whole School Literacy Plan* (RDHS, 2010) remained at the level of the compulsory years of Years One and Two. There was no attention given to the role of the non-compulsory years, namely Kindergarten and Pre-Primary, in achieving improvements in literacy at RDHS; that is, they had been effectively omitted from this ‘whole school’ policy.

Analysis of policy text production in *RDHS Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project School Plan* (RDHS, 2012) revealed a dominant theme of commanding policy. The theme of definitions of literacy also dominated and analysis identified the dominant theme of ECEC is important, with a contributory sub-theme of education focus.

The *RDHS Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project School Plan* (RDHS, 2012) was written by the School Leader (SR3) and Teacher Leader (SR2). There was minimal consultation with staff in policy production. The policy followed the format provided by the Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project management team, who were based in the metropolitan office of DoE (WA), and it was written to fulfil requirements of the school’s participation in this programme. As production processes involved externally sourced consultants, from within the policy elite, this contributed to the policy being commanding. Task-oriented discourses added persuasive force. For instance, strategies were presented in columns. This layout, together with declarative statements with action verbs such as in: “Teachers to
review and implement” (RDHS, 2012, p. 3), reinforced the commanding nature of this policy. Managerial language used in the titles of various sections, such as “building staff capacity” (RDHS, 2012, p. 4), further emphasised the document’s directive tones, and was further indication of the policy’s neoliberal underpinnings.

In *RDHS Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project School Plan* (RDHS, 2012), literacy was defined mainly in terms of reading, and this definition continued to frame literacy as the policy progressed. All of the targets for improved literacy learning were within the area of reading skills, with improvements to be measured by NAPLAN. Some reference was made to writing skills in the body of the text, with improvements also to be measured through NAPLAN. There were no other explanations or scoping of literacy. Aspects of literacy not measured by NAPLAN, such as speaking and listening or critical literacy, were not included. There was no mention of the use of teacher judgement in assessing students’ literacy learning. The framing of the definition of literacy in terms of what was being measured by NAPLAN reflected the school’s overriding concern with achieving improved results in this national testing regime.

In *RDHS Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project School Plan* (RDHS, 2012), the ECEC years, including non-compulsory, were accorded an explicit and important role in the school’s drive to improve literacy outcomes, as measured in NAPLAN. For instance, implementation of a literacy teaching framework included Pre-Primary and “Kindergarten and Pre-Primary Teachers [were] to lay the groundwork for the *Australian Curriculum* [(ACARA, 2011a] through intentional teaching of content” (RDHS, 2012, p. 6). Through this explicit inclusion of the ECEC years in whole school planning, the policy emphasised education in the ECEC years at RDHS. The provision of care was not mentioned.
Analysis of policy text production of interview data revealed various dominant themes, namely commanding policy and disjointed policy, with two contributory sub-themes of staffing profile and financial policy levers. Analysis also identified the theme of ECEC is important as dominant, with a contributory sub-theme of education focus. Participants’ comments revealed that literacy policy at RDHS had been written by leaders with minimal collaboration with staff. This reinforced the commanding nature of the policy. For instance, one of the participants said that *RDHS Whole School Literacy Plan* (RDHS, 2010) was “basically just put together” (SR3). Another participant revealed that the *RDHS Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project School Plan* (RDHS, 2012), the second of the policy documents, was a “quick hand-in” (SR2) to DoE (WA). This comment indicated a possible lack of time for consultation with staff. Furthermore, policy was handed to staff without consultation. One teacher said: “We got it at the start of the year” (SR1).

Comments from participants revealed that the literacy policy at RDHS was disjointed. One participant described the *RDHS Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project School Plan* (RDHS, 2012) as “a two day quick put-together” (SR2) and subsequently placed more importance on the *RDHS Whole School Literacy Plan* (RDHS, 2010). However, another participant referred to this earlier published document as: “out of date, needing review” (SR3). One of the participants did not mention the *RDHS Whole School Literacy Plan* (RDHS, 2010) when discussing the school’s literacy policy, referring only to the *RDHS Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project School Plan* (RDHS, 2012). The school’s Literacy Committee was not using either document in their decisions about resource purchases. The two documents had not been integrated as there was both repetition in, and differences
between, them. The literacy leadership team acknowledged the disjointed nature of literacy policy and recognised the need to ameliorate this. For instance, one leader said: “It’s time to put it [the RDHS Whole School Literacy Plan (RDHS, 2010) with the RDHS Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project School Plan (RDHS, 2012)] all together in one.” (SR2).

Participants’ comments revealed two contributory sub-themes of factors that contributed to the commanding and disjointed nature of policy production. The first was in regards to the school’s staffing profile. Many of the school’s teachers were transient. According to one participant, transient staff reinforced the need for commanding policy as: “You can’t keep collaborating with [and] changing a policy for new people coming in” (SR2). This also partly explained why minimal collaboration during policy text production had happened. Furthermore, most of the teachers at RDHS were new graduates. A participant observed: “They [the new graduate teachers] have so much else to think about” (SR3), such as the requirements of the job of teaching. This left minimal time and energy to consult over policy. The previous participant believed: “They just want to be told what to do” (SR2). To this participant, the new graduate teachers, which constituted the majority of staff, responded positively to directive literacy policy. Transient inexperienced staff meant less proficiency in policy management. The staffing profile provided some explanation as to why each document had been written using external expertise, with this adding persuasive force to the commanding nature of the resultant policy; that is, policy produced in consultation with these experts was not to be ignored.

The second sub-theme was in regards to financial policy levers. Participants revealed that RDHS received funding from the Australian Federal Government funded Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project to lift their apparent ‘poor”
NAPLAN results, and enhance the school’s, and the State’s, positioning. As one participant said: “Our funding comes from our results” (SR2), here referring to these financial policy levers. Through these financial policy levers, policy content at RDHS was being directed. The RDHS Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project School Plan (RDHS, 2012), which detailed strategies to be implemented to achieve ‘good’ NAPLAN results, had been written with advice from the Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project management team. Compliance by the school’s leadership and teachers in this process was positioned as obligatory, as non-compliance meant possible loss of funding.

Participants did not comment on how literacy was being defined in school literacy policy at RDHS. This possibly indicated acceptance of the definition of literacy being framed in policy by those aspects assessed by NAPLAN, particularly in the context of financial policy levers.

In this focused drive for improvements in NAPLAN, one participant commented there was a need, “to go down that area [ECEC] to improve our Year Three results” (SR3). This provided evidence of the assumption that the foundations for achieving ‘good’ performances in NAPLAN could, and needed to, be established when students were in the ECEC years. This also emphasised the importance of education in the ECEC years at RDHS. The provision of care was not mentioned.

The analysis of policy text production of the documentary data at RDHS revealed the dominant theme of commanding policy. Interview data paralleled these findings while revealing the additional dominant theme of disjointed policy, with two contributory sub-themes of staffing profile and financial policy levers. Relevant to this investigation, the analysis of documentary data revealed the dominant theme
of **definitions of literacy**. Through the data set, the theme of **ECEC is important** was identified as dominant, with a contributory sub-theme of **education focus**.

**Context of Policy Practices (Enactment)**

This section presents the findings from analysis of the context of policy practices (enactment). Below is a table that summarises the themes and sub-themes identified in the documentary and interview data from this case study, namely RDHS.

Table 8.3. Themes and Sub-Themes Identified in the Analysis of Context of Policy Practices (Enactment) at the Micro (Local: School) Level (RDHS).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Documentary data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership challenges</td>
<td>Professional learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data driven practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership challenges</td>
<td>Constant policy stream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional learning</td>
<td>Explicit content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As previously noted, school literacy policy at RDHS comprised of two documents; that is, *RDHS Whole School Literacy Plan* (RDHS, 2010) and *RDHS Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project School Plan* (RDHS, 2012). Analysis of policy practices (enactment) revealed a dominant theme in both of **leadership challenges**, with a contributory sub-theme of **professional learning**. The leaders at RDHS appeared to be struggling to lead literacy policy enactment in a coherent
manner. The leadership had produced each document at different points in time in response to direction received from externally-sourced consultants. Leaders were not promoting the two documents as a whole in practice.

Analysis of policy practices (enactment) of the later published RDHS Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project School Plan (RDHS, 2012) identified additional dominant themes, namely data driven practices and accountability. This document included a two-page section titled “use of data” (RDHS, 2012, p. 11-12). This detailed how analysis of data, from NAPLAN (Years Three, Five, Seven and Nine) and On-Entry Assessment Program (Pre-primary), was to inform creation of “target groups” (RDHS, 2012, p. 12) and “case-management plans” (RDHS, 2012, p. 12) aimed at achieving improvements in literacy outcomes. Thus, the data from these external testing regimes, and the student plans subsequently created, was to frame literacy teaching in the school to achieve good performances in future testing. Use of this data was also evidence of accountability mechanisms being put in place to monitor and track students’ improvements in literacy at RDHS towards competitive performances. There was no mention of the use of teacher judgements in this process. Teachers were also being made accountable for their literacy policy practices through “targeted performance management” (RDHS, 2012, p. 9), the criteria for which were to be “aligned with the LNPP school plan” (RDHS, 2012, p. 9); that is, RDHS Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project School Plan (RDHS, 2012).

Analysis of policy practices (enactment) in the interview data identified dominant themes of leadership challenges, with a contributory sub-theme of constant policy stream, professional learning, with a contributory sub-theme of explicit content, and accountability.
Participants’ comments revealed that leaders were struggling in managing literacy policy at RDHS. A perceived and continuous stream of policies from the broader policy context was identified as a contributing factor. Such was the constancy of policies into the school that there was perceived to be minimal time to respond to, implement and integrate these policies into the school literacy policy. The School Leader said: “The policies just keep coming.” (SR3). In an effort to remain cognisant of these policies, this School Leader had printed out and displayed on a noticeboard numerous policies from the broader policy context. This noticeboard was full. Recently, this School Leader had learnt of a policy from the broader policy context that was not on the noticeboard. The School Leader was not surprised about its existence or that they were unaware of it. To this School Leader, there seemed to be always another policy representing another set of expectations. The participant concluded: “There’s just so much to be done” (SR3); that is, leaders were struggling to ‘keep up’.

Leaders believed that the effects of a constant policy stream were being felt by the teachers and helping these teachers to deal with it added further to leaders’ struggles. One leader said: “People [teachers] are just drowning” (SR3), the word ‘drowning’ indicating this leader’s perception of teachers’ negative reactions. Consequently, this participant believed the school’s leadership needed to ‘protect’ teachers from the impact of this constant policy stream, commenting: “Administration have to be very aware of where staff is at” (SR3). This, in turn, left the school’s leaders with less time, and energy, for school literacy policy management. In addition, most of the teachers were new graduates and the School Leader (SR3) talked extensively of how leaders spent much time in helping graduate teachers to complete basic requirements of the job, such as report writing. This
impacted further on leaders’ time and energies for literacy policy management, thereby adding to their struggles in policy practices. The literacy leadership team acknowledged the need to integrate school literacy policy. However, a leader declared: “Who’s got the time to do that?” (SR3), such was the impact of these struggles.

Participants explained how they, as leaders, had engaged in externally-sourced professional learning in literacy policy such as visits to other schools. One participant said: “There’s nothing better than going to other schools and getting ideas” (SR2). However, this practice produced tensions. For instance, this same participant said: “We go and then come back but we still haven’t implemented what we did last time because I’m still doing the stuff from before” (SR2).

The school encouraged teachers to engage in professional learning themselves to improve their literacy teaching in the pursuit of improved outcomes. For instance, the school had sent ECEC teachers to numerous professional learning events, such as attendance at workshops. A participant explained: “I’ve gone to lots of literacy professional development” (SR1). However, conflicts and tensions were emerging from these practices.

The *RDHS Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project School Plan* (RDHS, 2012) called for ECEC teachers to lay the foundations of *Australian Curriculum: Version 2.0* (ACARA, 2011a) and ECEC teachers had attended relevant professional learning. Participants’ comments revealed a subsequent perception of the need to teach explicit content from the *Australian Curriculum: Version 2.0* (ACARA, 2011a), which was emerging in use at RDHS in the ECEC years, to adhere to school literacy policy. This was, in turn, seen to create almost a ‘push-down’ of the curriculum at RDHS into these years to ensure improved NAPLAN results in
literacy. For instance, one participant said that this had “moved the curriculum [content] down” (SR2) including to the non-compulsory years of Kindergarten and Pre-Primary. This was, according to another participant “really pushing them [Kindergarten and Pre-Primary students] for reading and writing” (SR1), the word ‘pushing’ indicating tensions in the explicit inclusion of this content. This latter participant, an ECEC teacher, had attended other professional learning on the EYLF (DEEWR for COAG, 2009), the national curriculum for children birth to five years of age. This participant expressed the view that the EYLF (DEEWR for COAG, 2009) presented a curriculum more in tune with traditional ECEC philosophy and pedagogy (see Chapter Three), describing it as having “a big focus on play” (SR1).

To this participant, this play-based pedagogy was in tension with the aforementioned school’s drive for more emphasis on explicit teaching of literacy content in the ECEC years in the pursuit of improved outcomes.

Participants’ comments revealed that pressures to teach content explicitly in ECEC were being reinforced through accountability mechanisms such as performance management. For instance, participants reported that teachers at RDHS were being required to “show” (SR2), or be accountable for, how they implemented the school’s literacy policy in performance management meetings.

Analysis of policy practices (enactment) in the documentary data collected at RDHS revealed a dominant theme of leadership challenges, with a contributory sub-theme emerging of professional learning. In the interview data, the theme of professional learning was found to be dominant, with a contributory sub-theme of explicit content. Analysis of policy practices (enactment) of the later published document identified additional dominant themes, namely data driven practices and
accountability. The theme of accountability was also identified from the interview data.

Context of Policy Outcomes

This section presents the findings from analysis of the context of policy outcomes. Below is a table that summarises the themes and sub-themes identified in the documentary and interview data from this case study, namely RDHS.

Table 8.4. Themes and Sub-Themes Identified in the Analysis of Context of Policy Outcomes at the Micro (Local: School) Level (RDHS).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Documentary data</td>
<td>Disempowerment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Whole school planning</td>
<td>ECEC inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Literacy narrowed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview data</td>
<td>Disempowerment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ECEC inclusion</td>
<td>Pedagogical change</td>
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Analysis of policy outcomes evident in the documentary data revealed three dominant themes, namely disempowerment, whole school planning, with a contributory sub-theme of ECEC inclusion, and literacy narrowed.

Both documents that comprised the school’s literacy policy at RDHS were produced using advice received from outside of the school. This conveyed the impression that leaders at RDHS did not trust their own knowledge base to produce effective literacy policy; that is, they appeared to be disempowered in their literacy leadership. Furthermore, lack of consultation by leaders with staff gave the
impression that leaders considered staff as not able to contribute effectively to production of literacy policy. This acted to disempower teachers in policy processes at RDHS. In addition, in the production of the *RDHS Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project School Plan* (RDHS, 2012), leaders followed guidelines provided by the policy elite, with persuasive force for compliance in this process added through financial policy levers being used over the school. This further disempowered leaders in their literacy leadership and teachers in literacy teaching; that is, they seemed to have ‘given control’ of the school’s literacy policy to the policy elite.

Analysis of the documents revealed that planning for literacy improvements had become overtly whole school based, with the ECEC years explicitly recognised and actively included as having a role to play in achieving these improvements. In the later published document, *RDHS Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project School Plan* (RDHS, 2012), results from the On-Entry Assessment Program were to be used in planning and teaching in these years, this being positioned to contribute towards these students achieving competitive performances in NAPLAN in later years. Written policy included strategies specifically aimed to be implemented in the ECEC years, so reflecting the belief that this will also contribute towards achieving improved performances in NAPLAN.

Literacy at RDHS was found to be increasingly defined across the written documentation as something that could be measured, accounted for and managed through the external testing regime of NAPLAN. In the earlier published document, the definition of literacy encompassed the modes of speaking and listening, and these modes are not assessed by NAPLAN. In the second, later published, document, the definition of literacy was mainly in relation to reading, with only some mention of
writing. Both of these modes are measured in NAPLAN. The previously included modes of speaking and listening were omitted in this document’s definition of literacy. There were many aspects of literacy missing in both documents such as digital, multi-modal and critical literacy.

It seemed that, in response to pressures to enhance the school’s competitiveness in literacy, underpinned by financial policy levers from the policy elite, the definition and scope of what was being taught in literacy at RDHS had become increasingly narrowed to what was assessed by NAPLAN. This was in tension with definitions in national curriculum policy, which described literacy as broad and encompassing many modes and many aspects. For instance, the EYLF (DEEWR for COAG, 2009) included dance, music and visual literacy in its definition and these were omitted from school literacy policy at RDHS. The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Version 3.0 (ACARA, 2011b) highlighted the importance of integrating literacy as a ‘General Capability’, but this too was omitted from school literacy policy at RDHS. The focus at RDHS was very much on specific and measurable aspects of reading and writing in order to improve performances in NAPLAN.

The analysis of policy outcomes of interview data revealed the dominant themes of disempowerment and ECEC inclusion, with a contributory sub-theme of pedagogical change. Comments indicated that staff members at RDHS were disempowered in their literacy leadership and teaching, and subsequently deskilled, with some expressing feelings of stress. Leaders and teachers did not seem to trust their knowledge base in literacy. Responding to pressures from the State policy elite for improved results in literacy outcomes, leaders frequently sought advice from sources outside the school to ensure that the school’s geographical and professional
isolation did not negatively impact upon the school’s drive for improvements.

Leaders also actively supported ECEC teachers in seeking advice from outside the school, and themselves; that is, they seemed to believe themselves unable to provide ongoing and appropriate professional support to ECEC teachers in literacy teaching without such external support. Participants reported that much of this advice came direct from the policy elite. Financial policy levers acted to further disempower and deskill the school leaders at RDHS: that is, they could not refuse the advice and direction from the policy elite as refusal meant possible loss of funding.

Furthermore, leaders at RDHS appeared overwhelmed and powerless against what they perceived as a stream of continuous directives from the national and State policy elite. For instance, one commented: “It [policy stream] is overwhelming” (SR3). Leaders at RDHS apparently had minimal say in what did come into the school; that is, they appeared to have lost control.

Participants’ comments revealed that ECEC teachers at RDHS also seemed disempowered and deskill, appearing to not trust their own knowledge base about literacy teaching in ECEC. For instance, in the face of policy pressures for improved results, one ECEC teacher was found to be frequently seeking advice and knowledge through avenues outside of the school. This teacher also sought advice from the Education Assistants in the school, who had not received university training like she had, but were perceived by this participant as having superior knowledge. This ECEC teacher presented as insecure in her knowledge, professional judgements and expertise in ECEC literacy teaching, commenting: “I just hope I’m doing everything I need to be doing. It’s finding the time really” (SR1), with these words communicating feelings of being overwhelmed and loss of control. The participant
was clearly experiencing stress, declaring: “I’m not managing all this very well. I just stress a lot. It’s been tricky” (SR1).

Participants revealed that the ECEC years at RDHS were being increasingly included as part of the whole school in the pursuit of literacy improvements. For instance, participants commented on how leaders regularly spent time in ECEC classes, observing or teaching small groups. Through this practice, the leadership maintained contact with ECEC which allowed exertion of some control.

Participants revealed concerns in the inclusion of the ECEC years in whole school planning. Participants perceived this to be leading to pressure for pedagogical change in ECEC from mainly traditional play-based pedagogy to more inclusion of explicit teaching. Explicit teaching was being positioned as ensuring students in the non-compulsory years develop the necessary reading and writing skills to allow them to be “school ready” (SR1). However, in the context of this pressure for explicit teaching, this same participant declared: “But play, where’s play going?” (SR1), so revealing concerns. Many of this participant’s subsequent comments indicated their struggles to find, what a participant termed, “a balance” (SR1) to reconcile the two pedagogies of play-based and explicit teaching in literacy teaching in the ECEC years at RDHS.

Interestingly, there were minimal comments from participants about the narrowing of literacy in written policy documents. It seemed that policy was so forceful in its command, underpinned by financial policy levers and factors inherent in the school’s staffing profile, that staff appeared to accept the need to narrow the definition and scope of literacy in order to effect improvements in scores.

Analysis of policy outcomes evident in the documentary data revealed the dominant themes of disempowerment, whole school planning, with a contributory
sub-theme of *ECEC inclusion*, and **literacy narrowed**. Interview data paralleled the findings of the dominant theme of **disempowerment**. However, *ECEC inclusion* became dominant in the interview data, with the emergence of a contributory sub-theme, namely **pedagogical change**.

**Concluding Discussion**

This chapter has presented the findings from analysis of the micro (local: school) level of the literacy policy trajectory under investigation in this study, through the first of three case study schools, namely RDHS. RDHS is a small district public high school located in a geographically isolated rural area in WA.

Analysis of documentary and interview data found that school literacy policy at RDHS was primarily influenced by the desire to enhance the school’s local, State and national competitive positioning, as measured through improved performances in the national testing regime, NAPLAN. This reflected a growing dominance of neoliberal ideology underpinning literacy policy at RDHS.

School literacy policy was found to be commanding in directing teachers. Participants revealed that policy was also disjointed, this being attributed to localised factors, such as the school’s staffing profile. However, financial policy levers, used over the school from the policy elite, accorded the policy elite with a measure of control in directing the content of school literacy policy at RDHS.

School literacy policy at RDHS was increasingly inclusive of the ECEC years in the pursuit of improvements in literacy outcomes, the assumption being that improvements in the ECEC years will yield improved results when these children engaged in NAPLAN in later years. There were specific strategies detailed for implementation in the ECEC years and teachers were included in data driven and
accountability focused literacy policy practices. However, teacher judgements in assessing literacy were being de-emphasised and there was a perception of increasing pressure for change in the ECEC years from reliance on traditional play-based approaches to more inclusion of explicit teaching of literacy content. Teachers were sourcing professional learning outside of the school to inform their literacy teaching but this created tensions. ECEC teachers at RDHS were found to be struggling and presented as disempowered and deskill in their literacy teaching.

Leaders at RDHS also seemed to be struggling and disempowered in their literacy leadership. They were spending much time and energy working with transient and inexperienced teachers in a geographically isolated school. Leaders’ work was further intensified by a constant stream of policy expectations from the broader policy context. In response, leaders frequently sought advice outside of the school to ensure compliance, and improvements, but this added to their struggles.

The working definition of literacy in school literacy policy at RDHS was becoming narrowed in scope and breadth. Policy at RDHS increasingly adopted improvement targets measured against NAPLAN and this consequently framed literacy by what was assessed in NAPLAN. This was in tension with definitions of literacy found in national curriculum policy documents.

This chapter analysed school literacy policy processes at one of the case study schools in this investigation, namely RDHS, with a focus on ECEC teachers. It was found that the intentions of the policy elite essentially dominated over localised factors in school literacy policy processes. The next chapter will present the findings from the second case study school.
Chapter Nine

Findings from Micro (Local: School) Level of the Literacy Policy Trajectory: Focus on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC):

Suburban Primary School

Introduction

This chapter presents findings from the analysis of documentary and interview data collected in the second of the case study schools at the micro (local: school) level of the literacy policy trajectory under investigation in this study, namely Suburban Primary School (SPS). Details of data sources, collection and analysis procedures at the micro (local: school) level are detailed in Chapter Five. Quotes from participants are referenced using a code that begins with (SS), meaning, ‘school – SPS’.

The Setting of SPS

This section describes the setting of SPS at the time of data collection, in late 2012, using the typology provided by Braun, Ball, Maguire and Hoskins (2011), as outlined at the start of Chapter Eight.

Situated context. SPS is a suburban public primary school located in the capital city of the State of Western Australia (WA). Open since the mid-twentieth century, SPS primarily provides for students who live in its ‘local area intake zone’, this being the immediately surrounding area of the school.

SPS, as an average sized primary school for WA, has approximately 400 students enrolled, Kindergarten to Year Seven. Almost half of these students are enrolled in the early childhood education and care (ECEC) years. Approximately one
quarter of the students attend SPS from out of the local area intake zone; that is, these families make SPS their ‘school of choice’.

**Material context.** Teachers at SPS are all experienced, each having at least five years of teaching experience at various schools. A few of the teachers have been at SPS for 20 years or more, with most being at the school 10 years or less. The Principal and the Deputy Principal are both relatively new to the school, each being at the school for less than three years. Neither of them has teaching duties.

The school receives funding from the Department of Education (DoE) (WA) according to number of enrolled students. As an Independent Public School (IPS) (see Chapter Two) within DoE (WA), the school has some flexibility in how these funds can be utilised.

The non-compulsory years of Kindergarten and Pre-Primary are housed, with Year One, in a building recently erected using a specific grant from the State Government. Before this, the Kindergarten classes were located off site.

**Professional context.** The School Leader (SS5) has recently taken over management of the school literacy policy. The leader is implementing a more coordinated approach than in previous years, when the literacy policy had been managed by a small group of teachers, released irregularly from classroom duties to undertake tasks as deemed required.

As part of the more recent approach, the School Leader (SS5) re-formed the Literacy Committee. This committee has teacher representation from across the school. The Literacy Committee regularly meets with the School Leader (SS5). These processes are perceived by staff as enabling teachers to have an active role in literacy policy management.
**External context.** Although an IPS, SPS remains under the jurisdiction of the DoE (WA). The school is thus governed by this department’s policies which are available online through the departmental portal.

Like all schools in Australia, SPS annually administers the National Assessment Program–Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), with results published online through the *MySchool* website ([https://www.myschool.edu.au/](https://www.myschool.edu.au/)) (see Chapter Two). Results from NAPLAN are used by the school in planning. It was reported by participants that some parents at SPS accessed the NAPLAN data through the *MySchool* website.

Two national curriculum policies are being implemented at SPS. The *Australian Curriculum: Version 2.0* (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2011a), the national curriculum for students from Foundation to Year 10, is in the early stages of implementation Pre-Primary to Year Seven. *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) for the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2009), hereafter called *The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)*, is the national curriculum for children from birth to five. It was reported by participants that this curriculum is being implemented in the non-compulsory years of Kindergarten and Pre-Primary.

The school accesses minimal professional learning from the central office of DoE (WA). Instead, individual teachers frequently access professional learning from external sources, such as private providers and local universities. The school also liaises with other government agencies, such as Community Health, in the development of specific learning programs for students.
Context of Policy Influences

This section presents the findings from analysis of the context of policy influences. Below is a table that summarises the themes and sub-themes identified in the documentary and interview data from this case study, namely SPS.

Table 9.1. Themes and Sub-Themes Identified in the Analysis of Context of Policy Influences at the Micro (Local: School) Level (SPS).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Type</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Documentary</td>
<td>School’s competitive positioning</td>
<td>The push for improved educational outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>School’s competitive positioning</td>
<td>The push for improved educational outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Competing for students</td>
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The Suburban Primary School (SPS) Whole School Literacy Plan (SPS, 2012) was the school’s written literacy policy. Analysis of policy influences of this document revealed a dominant theme, namely concerns about the school’s competitive positioning, with a contributory sub-theme of the push for improved educational outcomes.

The influence of the school’s concern about their local, State and national competitive positioning was evident early in the SPS Whole School Literacy Plan (SPS, 2012). The first two pages were dominated by targets, most of which were referenced against the national testing regime, NAPLAN. The prominence and repetition of the targets emphasised the strength of the influence on policy of the drive to improve NAPLAN results, and the school’s competitiveness. For instance,
one target was to “ensure 80% of children scoring very limited or limited progression in reading NAPLAN, make moderate to high progress” (SPS, 2012, p. 1). These comparative discourses, evident in words such as ‘progression’, characterised the remaining targets and reflected dominant neoliberal foundations to school literacy policy at SPS. Evidence of the influence of concerns about the school’s competitive positioning was also within statements describing priorities and strategies. For instance, one of the priorities was to “increase the performance of students and, in particular, the number of students achieving in the top 20% of the State, in NAPLAN” (SPS, 2012, p. 2), the competitive discourse inherent in the reference to ‘the top 20% of the State’ further reflecting competitive neoliberal underpinnings.

Furthermore, there was evidence of the influence of concerns with the school’s competitive positioning in policy specific to the ECEC years at SPS. For instance, the fifth target in SPS Whole School Literacy Plan (SPS, 2012) was referenced against results from an external testing regime administered in ECEC, specifically Pre-Primary and Year One at SPS, this being the DoE (WA)’s On-Entry Assessment Program (see Chapter Two). This indicated that the desire to achieve improved educational outcomes was pervading literacy policy specific to the ECEC years, so reflecting underlying neoliberal ideology.

The analysis of policy influences of interview data revealed a dominant theme, namely concerns about the school’s competitive positioning, with contributory sub-themes of the push for improved educational outcomes and competing for students.

Many participants commented upon the influence of NAPLAN on school literacy policy, reflecting concerns at SPS about the school’s local, State and national
competitive positioning. One participant declared that there was a: “Huge emphasis, huge emphasis placed on NAPLAN” (SS4) with another observing that: “The school’s literacy policy comes from a drive to improve NAPLAN” (SS3), and the school’s competitiveness, with these comments reflecting dominant neoliberal underpinnings of literacy policy at SPS.

A School Leader (SS5) explained the background to the school’s growing concerns. The participant described past NAPLAN results in literacy at SPS as: “Not acceptable” (SS5), explaining further how these had positioned SPS as “failing against ‘like schools’” (SS5), the comparative discourse in the words ‘against like’ revealing neoliberal underpinnings. This apparent ‘failure’ of SPS in not achieving desired local, State and national competitive positioning was resulting in “pressure” (SS5), from the DoE (WA) to improve performances in NAPLAN, with NAPLAN thus being positioned as a performance indicator. The leader declared: “NAPLAN does count”, explaining further: “We have to improve it, to stop that declining trend.” (SS5). According to the School Leader (SS5), such was the degree of influence on policy of the pressures to improve the school’s competitive positioning that staff at SPS needed to: “Do whatever it takes to improve results” (SS5). Actions to improve NAPLAN results in literacy were to be extended into the ECEC years, with one participant stating: “You don’t just teach whatever is needed in Year Three [when NAPLAN is first administered], you have to go right back” (SS3) to the years prior to NAPLAN. The assumption was that students would then develop the foundational literacy skills required for improved outcomes when these students engaged in NAPLAN in later years.

Parents can access the NAPLAN results online through the MySchool website. One participant explained: “Parents are choosing schools depending on the
results because they can access and check results [on MySchool website]” (SS1). A significant proportion of the student population at SPS attended the school from out of the local intake area. As revealed by this participant, it seemed that some parents may have used the publicly available NAPLAN results to inform their decision in making SPS their ‘school of choice’; that is, the school was competing locally with other schools for students. Improved NAPLAN results would enhance the school’s local competitive positioning which, in turn, had the potential to attract more students to the school. As funds at SPS were allocated by DoE (WA) on the basis of the number of enrolled students, more students also meant more funding. This strengthened the persuasive force of the competitive neoliberal ideology underpinning literacy policy at SPS.

Analysis of policy influences evident in the documentary and interview data collected at SPS revealed a dominant theme, namely concerns about the school’s competitive positioning, with a contributory sub-theme of the push for improved educational outcomes. Analysis of the interview data also revealed an additional sub-theme of competing for students.

Context of Policy Text Production

This section presents the findings from analysis of the context of policy text production. Below is a table that summarises the themes and sub-themes identified in the documentary and interview data from this case study, namely SPS.
Table 9.2. Themes and Sub-Themes Identified in the Analysis of Context of Policy Text Production at the Micro (Local: School) Level (SPS).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Documentary data</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disjointed policy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Commanding policy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Definitions of literacy</td>
<td>Variations in definitions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ECEC is important</td>
<td>Education focus</td>
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<table>
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<th>Interview data</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Disjointed policy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Evolving policy</td>
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<td>Commanding policy</td>
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<td>Definitions of literacy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ECEC is important</td>
<td>Division</td>
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Analysis of policy text production of documentary data revealed two dominant themes, namely disjointed policy and commanding policy. Relevant to areas of policy being investigated in this study, analysis revealed two additional dominant themes, namely definitions of literacy, with a contributory sub-theme of variations in definitions, and ECEC is important, with a contributory sub-theme of education focus.

The SPS Whole School Literacy Plan (SPS, 2012), provided by the leaders as the school’s current written literacy policy, was disjointed. It was in two separately written sections. The School Leader (SS5) had written the first section earlier in the year. The second section had been written by various teachers in the previous year. There was minimal integration of the two sections.

Despite being disjointed, the SPS Whole School Literacy Plan (SPS, 2012) maintained a commanding tone throughout. The impression created was that this policy was a directive from the school’s leadership to teachers; that is, compliance.
by teachers appeared to be non-negotiable. The policy’s layout, language and discourses informed this finding. For instance, targets on the front page of the SPS Whole School Literacy Plan (SPS, 2012) established the goal of the policy from the outset and the task-oriented discourses that followed directed teachers on how to achieve these targets. Strategies were presented in a diagram of boxed bullet points, which used command statements, and a table of dot points, that comprised present tense simple statements. These task-oriented discourses implied that the strategies were already in place. Some inclusion of future tense, with the use of modal verbs or the infinitive tense, such as “teachers will” (SPS, 2012, p. 3), reinforced the directive tone of the commands in the SPS Whole School Literacy Plan (SPS, 2012). Headings throughout used a mixture of economic discourse, such as “monitoring” (SPS, 2012, p. 3), and managerial discourse, such as “exit outcomes” (SPS, 2012, p. 4), these discourses reflective of an underlying neoliberal ideology to the SPS Whole School Literacy Plan (SPS, 2012).

As a literacy policy, the SPS Whole School Literacy Plan (SPS, 2012) began with framing the concept of literacy broadly in terms of “reading, writing, spelling, viewing and speaking and listening” (SPS, 2012, p. 1) but did not explain or expand upon these terms. In the next sentence, literacy teaching was described as “sequential approach to skill development” (SPS, 2012, p. 1). Within the body of the text itself, the notion of literacy was embedded within numerous and various programs and resources. These represented varied theories and approaches in literacy teaching (see Chapter Three). There were no other explicit statements about what constituted literacy. The overall impression remained that literacy was to be taught as a skill set in a specific sequence. Achievement of these skills was to be measured, mainly
through NAPLAN, together with other assessment tasks, such as spelling lists. There was no mention of teacher judgements in assessing students’ literacy learning.

Achieving a consistent definition of literacy through the policy seemed to be problematic at SPS. This may have been partly attributable to the disjointed nature of policy production. The different people who had written each part of the documentation may have injected their own ideas and philosophies as to what constituted literacy. Aspects of literacy such as digital, multimodal, visual or critical literacy, and the need to integrate literacy, were not explicit. Thus, the definition of literacy within written policy at SPS was not only variable but, overall, was in tension with definitions provided by national curriculum documents, such as *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Version 3.0* (ACARA, 2011b) and the *EYLF* (DEEWR for COAG, 2009).

Analysis of the *SPS Whole School Literacy Plan* (SPS, 2012) revealed that the ECEC years, including the non-compulsory years of Kindergarten and Pre-Primary, were accorded an important role in school literacy policy at SPS in the pursuit of improved outcomes in NAPLAN. For instance, in the *SPS Whole School Literacy Plan* (SPS, 2012), one of the five targets was in relation to student achievements in the On-Entry Assessment Program, which was administered in Pre-Primary, as well as Year One, at SPS. The underlying assumption seemed to be that teaching targeted towards improved performances in this program would contribute towards improved results when these students engaged in NAPLAN. Furthermore, there were strategies explicitly aimed for implementation in Kindergarten and Pre-Primary, such as: “K-2 staff to use *Let’s Decode* strategy” (SPS, 2012, p. 2). *Let’s Decode* is a phonics teaching method (see Chapter Three) developed by Lorraine Hammond. There was also acknowledgement of the use of the *EYLF* (DEEWR for
COAG, 2009) by Kindergarten teachers “to inform literacy and learning programs” (SPS, 2012, p. 2). In addition, the “K-1 Literacy Plan” (SPS, 2012, p. 4) had been included as a section and this reinforced the inclusion of both non-compulsory and compulsory years of ECEC in the school’s literacy policy. Education in the early years was thus accorded more emphasis over care at SPS.

Analysis of policy text production of the interview data revealed dominant themes that were disjointed policy, evolving policy and commanding policy. Relevant to specific policy under investigation in this study, the interview data revealed the dominant themes of definitions of literacy, with a contributory sub-theme of variations in definitions, and ECEC is important, with a contributory sub-theme of division.

One participant explained that written literacy policy at SPS was disjointed partly because of past policy production processes in which individual teachers had been released from classroom duties irregularly to perform particular tasks. This participant subsequently described past policy text production as being on an “ad hoc” (SS2) basis, with these words implying lack of planning, cohesion and direction.

Participants revealed that, since the formation of the new school leadership team earlier in the year, the school’s literacy policy had been evolving. In response to the desire to improve the school’s competitive positioning, the school’s relatively new leadership decided that the policy had to: “change” (SS5) in the pursuit of improved outcomes in NAPLAN. Some change was already in place, being implemented: “Gently, without alarming the teachers” (SS5), so considering staff’s welfare and limiting resistance to change. Some of the documents and plans created in the previous year had been included in the SPS Whole School Literacy Plan (SPS,
such as the “K-1 Literacy Plan”, which had been written by some ECEC teachers. There were also included strategies and literacy programs already in place at SPS, thus acknowledging and condoning their use. However, as one participant indicated “It’s [the school literacy policy] in its infancy. That’s [the school literacy policy] going to change” (SS5) and evolve even further.

Participants’ comments revealed support for change in the school literacy policy. There was positive recognition of the new leadership team, with one participant describing them as: “very attuned with what is going on in the department and what is needed” (SS2). This also acknowledged that change was required in response to pressures from the State policy elite in WA for enhanced competitiveness. Another participant applauded the change as, after years of focusing on Science in the school: “The focus was on literacy now” (SS4).

In agreeing with change, one participant also supported directive policy: “We all want to be on the same page” (SS1). Another commented similarly: “We have got to be all on the same page and have ... consistency” (SS5), with this revealing a positive attitude towards commanding policy, being seen to facilitate coherence in the school’s direction. Another participant said: “We need more direction” (SS4), with another similarly commenting: “I do like direction” (SS3); that is, they were accepting of policy that was commanding.

When asked about what constituted literacy at SPS, participants gave various replies, with most emphasising skills in literacy that were teachable and easily measurable rather than other, broader aspects (see Chapter Three). For instance, one defined literacy in terms of language conventions, such as “homonyms” (SS4). Another spent much time talking about the teaching strategy of “sound a week” (SS1) to support the development of students’ decoding skills. A further participant
focused discussion of literacy on sounds that were taught in particular scope and sequence, being “SATPIN sequence” (SS2) to give students “the tools for reading” (SS2). One of the participants indicated that trying to define and clarify literacy as a concept was problematic as: “Literacy is not neat and tidy” (SS4), so resulting in variations. No participants included aspects of literacy such as speaking and listening nor did they refer to the breadth of literacy as found in national curriculum documents. They also omitted from their discussions other aspects of literacy, such as critical or multimodal literacy, and the integration of literacy across the curriculum.

Participants revealed that the ECEC years were being accorded an important role in school literacy policy in the achievement of improved literacy outcomes. One participant, an ECEC teacher of a non-compulsory year, commented: “We are now WHOLE [participant’s emphasis] school based, which is lovely because it means that ECEC is included” (SS1), explaining later that, because of this, the participant also felt included as a staff member at the school. However, some participants revealed concerns in relation to the nature of inclusion. Although the “K-1 Literacy Plan” (SPS, 2012, p. 4) had been included, this had not been fully integrated into the whole school literacy policy, being described by another participant, who was not an ECEC teacher, as “their [implying ECEC] own plan” (SS4) merely “linked in with the rest of the school” (SS4). This conveyed the impression of a division between the ECEC years and the rest of the school.

Analysis of policy text production evident in the documentary and interview data revealed dominant themes of disjointed policy and commanding policy, with the interview data revealing an additional dominant theme of evolving policy. Relevant to particular policy aspects investigated in this study, documentary and
interview data both revealed the dominant themes of definitions of literacy, with a contributory sub-theme of variations in definitions, and ECEC is important. However, while the documentary data revealed education focus as a contributory sub-theme to ECEC is important, the interview data revealed a different contributory sub-theme of division.

Context of Policy Practices (Enactment)

This section presents the findings from analysis of the context of policy practices (enactment). Below is a table that summarises the themes and sub-themes identified in the documentary and interview data from this case study, namely SPS.

Table 9.3. Themes and Sub-Themes Identified in the Analysis of Context of Policy Practices (Enactment) at the Micro (Local: School) Level (SPS).

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<th>Document</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>data</td>
<td>Data driven practices</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interview data</td>
<td>Data driven practices</td>
<td>Explicit content</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accountability</td>
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Analysis of policy practices (enactment) of the documentary data revealed a dominant theme that was data driven practices, with a contributory sub-theme of accountability. Data was predominantly positioned in the documentation as framing literacy teaching. The SPS Whole School Literacy Plan (SPS, 2012) placed targets for improved literacy outcomes early in the text, repeating them later. This emphasised their importance and created the impression that the intention was for the
data, in relation to these targets, to drive subsequent practice, and literacy teaching. There was no mention of the use of teacher judgements of students’ progress to frame future literacy teaching. Consequently, teachers were being made accountable for their literacy teaching predominantly through data that demonstrated achievement of these targets.

Analysis of the interview data revealed dominant themes of data driven practices, with a contributory sub-theme of explicit content, and accountability. One participant explained: “You are trying to get kids to achieve well at NAPLAN, there are obviously steps to NAPLAN. There is underlying knowledge that those kids need” (SS3). Another participant described how staff at SPS also “highlighted” (SS2) students’ errors in the NAPLAN test, as possible areas of weakness, to be targeted through future teaching. The assumption was that the ‘underlying knowledge’ and corrected ‘errors’ could then be explicitly taught as a means to achieving improved results; that is, literacy teaching at SPS was being driven by the data.

These data driven practices were also impacting literacy teaching in the ECEC years, even though these students did not engage in NAPLAN until the age of eight, in Year Three. A participant explained: “We link poor NAPLAN results back to what happens in ECEC” (SS3). Many of the ECEC teachers at SPS named these data driven literacy policy practices as ‘backward mapping’. For instance, one ECEC teacher commented that there had been: “backward mapping the NAPLAN results ... What are we going to do to address the NAPLAN results?” (SS2). Another participant said that backward mapping allowed ECEC teachers, including those in the non-compulsory years, to: “See where there are deficits and think what we can do [in ECEC] to influence the NAPLAN results” (SS1). Teachers in ECEC were thus
teaching in ways that they believed would directly contribute to improved NAPLAN results when these children engaged in NAPLAN in future years. The use of data dominated in guiding this.

Furthermore, the interview data revealed that data driven policy practices in the ECEC years were not confined to using data from NAPLAN. One participant explained how results from the On-Entry Assessment Program, administered in Pre-Primary and Year One at SPS, were similarly being used to provide specific direction in literacy teaching in the ECEC years. For instance, according to this participant, student errors in the On-Entry Assessment Program were identified as “deficits” in students’ literacy learning that could be eliminated through future teaching, with this leading to improved results in this testing. The participant explained: “I will have a discussion with the Pre-Primary teachers so I know I need to focus more in Kindergarten to prepare the students for certain areas” (SS1). The participant continued with an example: “The Pre-Primary teachers will say ‘look they didn’t know that a sentence starts with a capital in the testing’. So I think, ‘okay, I must introduce that into my programming’” (SS1).

The impression was that staff believed that targeted literacy teaching in the ECEC years, developed from analysis of the data from both NAPLAN and On-Entry Assessment Program, would ultimately improve results when these children were assessed in NAPLAN. The use of teacher judgements in assessing students’ progress in literacy in the ECEC years was not mentioned by participants. It seemed that, in the drive for improved NAPLAN results, data had become the dominant frame for literacy teaching throughout SPS, including in the ECEC years.

Some participants were accepting of data driven practices at SPS. For instance, one ECEC teacher, who had spent time teaching ‘off site’ in the
Kindergarten area in previous years, felt included through her participation in these practices, saying: “We are very included [in data driven policy practices] ... and it’s fantastic” (SS1). However, another participant revealed concern: “How can you unpack NAPLAN to the point that you know what you are going to teach in Kindergarten?” (SS3), as Kindergarten students in WA did not engage in NAPLAN for another four years. This participant questioned using NAPLAN to direct the content of teaching in the ECEC years.

The practice of ‘backward mapping’ was producing explicit content to be taught in literacy in the ECEC years. One ECEC teacher spent a large proportion of the interview providing numerous examples of explicit teaching of literacy content, with the content derived from data analysis. The explicit teaching of literacy content seemed to be in tension with traditional play-based pedagogy (see Chapter Three). Another participant said “Pre-Primary ... has that ‘push down’ of explicit content” (SS2), the words ‘push down’ according negative connotations. In an attempt to resolve these perceived tensions, one participant positioned play-based pedagogy as: “a fantastic hook” (SS1) for the explicit content. The previously quoted participant suggested: “You could actually still make it all hands on and you can be explicit without taking out the play” (SS2), with both of these participants suggesting adoption of both pedagogies in a ‘balanced’ way.

Participants’ comments revealed the emergence of the use of performance management processes as accountability on teachers. A School Leader explained that teachers’ engagement with school’s literacy policy processes was “linked to their performance management” (SS5), explaining that teachers were required to document their engagement for performance management purposes. Another participant, a teacher, explained: “We fill out a form, and on it, it has all the stuff
that you are meant to be doing and what you have done” (SS3). The participant recognised that, in this way, teachers were “held accountable” (SS3) to the school literacy policy. This was an emerging practice not yet documented in written school literacy policy. It suggested some exertion of control by the leadership in school literacy policy practices.

Analysis of policy practices (enactment) evident in both the documentary and interview data collected at SPS revealed a dominant theme of data driven practices, with the interview data revealing a contributory sub-theme of explicit content. While the theme of accountability was found to be a contributory sub-theme in the documentary data, there was a shift in the interview data, with the theme of accountability emerging as dominant.

Context of Policy Outcomes

This section presents the findings from analysis of the context of policy outcomes. Below is a table that summarises the themes and sub-themes identified in the documentary and interview data from this case study, namely SPS.
Table 9.4. Themes and Sub-Themes Identified in the Analysis of Context of Policy Outcomes at the Micro (Local: School) Level (SPS).

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<th>Documentary data</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Re-skilled</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Whole school planning</td>
<td>ECEC inclusion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Literacy narrowed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview data</td>
<td>Re-skilled</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Literacy narrowed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ECEC inclusion</td>
<td>Division</td>
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<td>Pedagogical change</td>
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Analysis of policy outcomes in the documentary data revealed dominant themes of **re-skilled, whole school planning**, with a contributory sub-theme of **ECEC inclusion**, and **literacy narrowed**. Overall, the *SPS Whole School Literacy Plan* (SPS, 2012) directed teachers on what and how to teach literacy. It was aimed at re-skilling teachers to implement specific strategies to achieve literacy improvements, with this informed by, and measured through, NAPLAN results. There was no mention of the use of teacher judgement in these processes.

The stated purpose in the *SPS Whole School Literacy Plan* (SPS, 2012) was to implement “a consistent approach across the school” (SPS, 2012, p. 1) that was to include “all staff” (SPS, 2012, p. 1), with the words ‘across the school’ and ‘all’ indicating a whole school approach in the pursuit of literacy improvement. The ECEC years were also explicitly included in this pursuit.

The working definition of literacy that dominated the *SPS Whole School Literacy Plan* (SPS, 2012) was narrow. Although variable, statements that defined
literacy and what was to be taught were mostly about explicit skills, with emphasis on those aspects of literacy measured by NAPLAN. This framed the working definition of literacy to measurable aspects. There were minimal references to how literacy is defined in national curriculum documents, such as *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Version 3.0* (ACARA, 2011b), which emphasises the need to integrate literacy across the curriculum. There was also minimal mention of the many modes included in the definition of literacy in the *EYLF* (DEEWR for COAG, 2009). For instance, dance, music and visual literacy were omitted. It seemed that, in the focus on data driven literacy teaching practices, other modes and underpinnings of literacy were not as emphasised.

Analysis of policy outcomes in the interview data revealed dominant themes of *re-skilled, literacy narrowed* and *ECEC inclusion*, with *division* and *pedagogical change* being two contributory sub-themes. Managed by the leadership of the school, the teachers at SPS were working as a group in an overall consistent manner. Responding to pressures from the State policy elite to improve NAPLAN results, teachers were consequently being re-skilled in their literacy teaching. They were teaching literacy according to analysis of the data, this being mostly NAPLAN, but also included the On-Entry Assessment Program, with accountability mechanisms in place through data collected in relation to targets and teachers’ performance. Participants did not mention the use of teacher judgement in assessing students’ literacy learning or informing future teaching.

Teachers at SPS were thus being persuaded to teach literacy in a narrow sense, according to what the data suggested they should; that is, the data informed the teachers of what, and how, they should be teaching in literacy. Interviews were dense with examples from teacher participants of how they taught explicit literacy
content derived from analysis of the data, such as “decoding skills” (SS1) or “text structure” (SS3). There was minimal mention of other aspects of literacy by participants such as digital or critical literacy.

ECEC was being explicitly included in policy at SPS, the assumption seeming to be that targeted teaching in these years will yield improved results in the future. The sector also had representation on the newly re-formed Literacy Committee. However, some participants expressed concern on the ways in which inclusion in school literacy policy processes was impacting upon ECEC pedagogy. One participant commented: “I do worry about the … way that early childhood is going” (SS2), this referring to the perceived pressure for pedagogical change from mainly traditional play-based to more emphasis on including teaching explicit content in ECEC. Another participant observed: “That more and more explicit content is filtering down to early childhood” (SS4). The participant continued: “So that level of formality is needed” (SS4) to teach the required content, with the word ‘formality’ implying that increased inclusion of explicit literacy content may possibly have negative impact upon play-based pedagogy. Further explanation was offered by another participant, who said: “The focus [in ECEC] is still on play, obviously, but literacy and numeracy implementation in the classroom … big change in ECEC” (SS1), explaining how the change meant a change to teaching content within specific learning areas rather than in an integrated way through domains (see Chapter Three). This participant further explained that play was becoming more of a skill to be explicitly taught to “some children” (SS1).

Furthermore, some participants queried if inclusion of the ECEC years was genuine. One participant expressed the view that ECEC teachers had not been included in the negotiations and collaboration on the changes in the school’s literacy
policy “as much as I would like” (SS2). This participant added: “You have a staff meeting and most of it is aimed at Primary” (SS2), indicating exclusion, lack of voice and some feelings of disempowerment. It seemed that there was a perceived division at SPS between the ECEC years and the rest of the school, with another ECEC teacher saying: “I think that early childhood’s a bit forgotten or not as recognised as [part of the school] unless you are an early childhood person” (SS3).

An experienced ECEC teacher participant, who had worked in a variety of other contexts, believed that ECEC teachers themselves, including those in the non-compulsory years, needed “to be proactive in a school” (SS2) and foster inclusion in school literacy policy processes. This participant, a teacher in the non-compulsory years at SPS, was engaged in numerous activities: “to be informed” (SS2) to enable her engagement with school policy processes while still maintaining pedagogy she deemed appropriate for the children she taught in ECEC. Engagement in such activities allowed her to maintain control. For instance, the participant attended professional learning provided by the teachers’ union and described it as providing information that enabled ECEC teachers to have a voice, saying: “The union was ... here is the information. The ELYF [DEEWR for COAG, 2009] says you [ECEC teachers] don’t have to do that [formalised learning styles].” (SS2). The participant also believed that the voice of ECEC teachers could be further enhanced through ECEC professionals working together through networks: “To know that you are not the only person and that there are people out there that have the same feelings or thoughts as you” (SS2). To this participant, these strategies would enable more control by ECEC teachers in school literacy policy processes in ways deemed to be appropriate for students in the ECEC years.
Another participant, an ECEC teacher in Kindergarten, explained how she had become more active in inclusion and expressed positive outcomes from this. This participant was a member of the Literacy Committee and actively participated in whole staff analysis of NAPLAN data, as well as analysis of data from the On-Entry Assessment. This participant said: “We [ECEC] are not ... independently doing our own thing. We are very much linked so it is great”. The participant was clearly feeling empowered by her active inclusion. She did not appear to be controlled by the leadership, later commenting:

*You have a sense that you can have a conversation* [with the leadership] *and you will be empowered from that conversation, you know, and be taken on board and that everyone is valued. I think you feel empowered because you are involved in that way.* (SS1).

Analysis of policy outcomes in the documentary data revealed evidence of dominant themes of re-skilled, whole school planning, with a contributory sub-theme of *ECEC inclusion*, and literacy narrowed. The interview data paralleled these findings in relation to the dominant themes of re-skilled and literacy narrowed. However, the theme of *ECEC inclusion* became dominant, with division and *pedagogical change* being two contributory sub-themes.
Concluding Discussion

This chapter has presented the findings from analysis of data from the second of the case study schools at the micro (local: school) level of the literacy policy trajectory under investigation, namely SPS. SPS is a medium sized suburban primary school that is staffed with experienced teachers and a new leadership team.

Analysis of policy influences of documentary and interview data found that policy at SPS was principally influenced by, and focused upon, a desire to enhance the school’s local, State and national competitive positioning. School literacy policy at SPS was disjointed, but evolving, as relatively new leaders in the school, responding to pressures from the policy elite and parental choice discourse, identified the need to achieve improved outcomes in the school’s NAPLAN results, intended to begin in ECEC. The leadership was implementing change in the school’s literacy policy in a ‘gentle’ but directive way. Data driven literacy policy practices dominated, with teachers being made accountable for these practices through emerging performance management processes. Some teachers were embracing and accepting of these changes, while others were questioning and resistant.

One outcome of school literacy policy processes at SPS was that teachers in the ECEC years were being re-skilled in their literacy teaching. Their previous perceptions and experiences of literacy teaching were deconstructed and re-constructed to become data driven. NAPLAN was the major source of data being used, along with data from the On-Entry Assessment Program, administered in Pre-Primary and Year One at SPS. This seemed to be in deference to the use of teacher judgements to inform literacy assessment, and teaching. Data driven literacy policy practices were creating pressure for change from an emphasis on mainly play-based literacy pedagogy to the inclusion of more explicit teaching of content in ECEC,
particularly in the non-compulsory years of Kindergarten and Pre-Primary. Some ECEC teachers were feeling unease and exclusion with these changes. However, others were engaging in various activities, internally and externally to the school, that enabled them to feel empowered to ensure the changes continued to be deemed appropriate for their students in the ECEC years.

Another outcome of school literacy policy processes at SPS was that the working definition of literacy itself was being narrowed. Data driven literacy policy practices were framing the breadth and scope of literacy to being a set of measurable skills, resulting in a focus on the explicit teaching of literacy content. This was seen to be in tension with broader definitions of literacy that were presented within national curriculum documents.

This chapter has analysed school literacy policy processes at the second of the case study schools in this investigation, namely SPS, with a focus on ECEC teachers. School literacy policy at SPS was found to be predominantly responding to pressures from the State policy elite in WA for enhanced local, State and national positioning. The next chapter will present the findings from the third case study school.
Chapter Ten

Findings from Micro (Local: School) Level of the Literacy Policy Trajectory:

Focus on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC):

Town Primary School

Introduction

This chapter presents findings from the analysis of documentary and interview data collected in the third of the case study schools at the micro (local: school) level of the literacy policy trajectory under investigation in this study, namely Town Primary School (TPS). Data sources, collection and analysis procedures at the micro (local: school) level are detailed in Chapter Five. Quotes from participants are referenced using a code that begins with (ST), meaning 'school – TPS’.

The Setting of TPS

This section describes the setting of TPS at the time of data collection, being late 2012, using the typology provided by Braun, Ball, Maguire and Hoskins (2011), as outlined at the start of Chapter Eight.

Situated context. TPS is a relatively new public school in a newly developed area of regional Western Australia (WA). It has grown rapidly since opening, with projections for continued growth. It has over 600 students enrolled, nearly half of whom are enrolled in the early childhood education and care (ECEC) years.

When it first opened, TPS comprised mainly of students from middle to high socioeconomic backgrounds. The school established a ‘good’ reputation early so many of these families intentionally bought housing located within the school’s local
intake area to ensure their children were able to attend TPS. However, recently available cheaper land within the school’s local intake area has resulted in many families from lower socioeconomic backgrounds buying into the area, with their children now attending the school.

**Material context.** TPS has an experienced teaching staff, with each having five or more years of teaching experience at various schools. Within the school’s leadership team, which comprises of the Principal and two Deputy Principals, two leaders have been at the school for three or more years but the third joined the team only this year. None of the leadership team has teaching roles. The staffing profile at TPS frequently changes as new staff members are employed every year to cater for the growing student population.

TPS is an Independent Public School (IPS) (see Chapter Two), funded through the Department of Education (DoE) (WA). It receives no additional grants.

**Professional context.** Three staff members manage the school’s literacy policy, namely the Teacher Leader (ST5) and two School Leaders (ST6 and ST7). All have experience in policy management. The Teacher Leader (ST5) and one School Leader (ST6) are relatively new to TPS.

The Literacy Committee, with representation from all year levels, was re-formed by the School Leader (ST6) earlier in the year. This committee have recently published an operational plan, which is included in the *Town Primary School (TPS) Whole School Literacy Plan* (TPS, 2012). This operational plan details intended expenditure in literacy for the following year.

**External context.** Although an IPS, staff at TPS remain employees of the DoE (WA) and so are required to abide with the department’s policies. These policies are available online to staff through the departmental portal.
TPS, like all schools in Australia, annually administers the National Assessment Program–Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) (see Chapter 2, Background). These results are used by staff at TPS to guide planning. Participants reported that parents did not often access the school’s online NAPLAN results, which are available on the MySchool website (https://www.myschool.edu.au/) (see Chapter Two).

Teachers at TPS are in the early stages of implementing the national curriculum, namely the Australian Curriculum: Version 2.0 (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2011a), for students Pre-Primary to Year Seven. ECEC teachers in the non-compulsory years of Kindergarten and Pre-Primary were incorporating into their planning Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) for the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2009), hereafter called The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF). This is the national curriculum for students from birth to age five.

Teachers and leaders at TPS infrequently receive professional learning in policy management and literacy teaching from personnel in central DoE (WA) and, when they do so, this is ‘on request’ from the school. Instead, most staff at TPS frequently access professional learning provided by professional organisations and private providers.
Context of Policy Influences

This section presents the findings from analysis of the context of policy influences. Below is a table that summarises the themes and sub-themes identified in the documentary and interview data from this case study, namely TPS.

Table 10.1. Themes and Sub-Themes Identified in the Analysis of Context of Policy Influences at the Micro (Local: School) Level (TPS).

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<th></th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Documentary data</td>
<td>School’s competitive positioning</td>
<td>The push for improved educational outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview data</td>
<td>School’s competitive positioning</td>
<td>The push for improved educational outcomes</td>
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The Town Primary School (TPS) Whole School Literacy Plan (TPS, 2012) was the school’s written literacy policy. Analysis of the document revealed a dominant theme of policy influences, namely concerns about the school’s competitive positioning, with a contributory sub-theme of the push for improved educational outcomes.

There was evidence early in the TPS Whole School Literacy Plan (TPS, 2012) of the influence of the school’s concern with its local, State and national competitive positioning, and the need to subsequently improve educational outcomes to maintain competitiveness. For instance, in the section that began the policy, titled “Language and Literacy” (TPS, 2012, p. 1-2), it was declared that the aim of the policy was to make “TPS an award winning school” (TPS, 2012, p. 1), with the
competitive language in ‘award winning’ exposing an underpinning neoliberal ideology. The next section, titled “Whole school literacy planning: assessment overview” (TPS, 2012, p. 3), presented an extensive list of literacy assessments. “Government mandated testing” (TPS, 2012, p. 3) was listed at the top of the page, with the word ‘mandated’ according these external testing regimes with a legal and obligatory status. These were NAPLAN, administered in Years Three, Five and Seven, and the DoE (WA)’s On-Entry Assessment Program (see Chapter Two), administered in the ECEC years. School-managed internal assessments, listed underneath, were not labelled as ‘mandated’. This accorded the ‘government mandated’ testing regimes with more importance, so providing additional evidence of the school’s overriding neoliberal concerns about its local, State and national competitive positioning.

Analysis of policy influences of the interview data at TPS revealed a dominant theme of influences, namely concerns about the school’s competitive positioning, with a contributory sub-theme of the push for improved educational outcomes. Many participants commented upon the pursuit of improved performances in literacy in NAPLAN to enhance the school’s local, State and national competitive positioning, so revealing neoliberal underpinnings of school literacy policy. A participant explained: “So much of our school’s performance is judged … on our NAPLAN performance” (ST7). Another commented: “Our NAPLAN results are terrible. As a school we have to make that [NAPLAN results] a focus, because they [the students] are not making progress” (ST6). This was also commented upon by other participants, such as one who said: “Our NAPLAN English results were very poor” (ST2). Another participant said: “I have got no doubt, if our school had got green flags in NAPLAN in literacy I wouldn’t be so concerned but it hasn’t and
NAPLAN is very much a driver [of literacy policy]” (ST7) Absence of ‘green flags’, which appeared in the online presentation of the NAPLAN results, was perceived as indicating a lack of student progress in literacy. Consequently, participants expressed the belief that the primary aim of the school’s literacy policy was to raise NAPLAN results, and improve the school’s local, State and national competitive positioning, such was the force of these influences on policy. For instance, one participant said: “Literacy is a priority and lift NAPLAN results,” (ST6) while another concluded: “NAPLAN did drive a lot of the literacy policy” (ST3).

Participants also commented on how concern about the students’ performances in NAPLAN was influencing literacy policy in the ECEC years. The On-Entry Assessment Program was currently being administered at TPS in the non-compulsory year of Pre-Primary. There were plans at TPS to extend assessment into the compulsory years of ECEC, namely Years One and Two. On this, a participant said: “We are going to do it [On-Entry Assessment Program] in Year One next year as well so that these students will get tracked” (ST6). Another participant explained that plans to implement a further module for assessment of these children when they reached Year Two meant: “Our pre-primary cohort is now going to be mapped until their NAPLAN year in Year Three” (ST3). The perception was that ‘tracking’ students’ progress in literacy in the ECEC years, through the On-Entry Assessment Program, would enable implementation of targeted teaching to ensure good performances when these children engaged in NAPLAN. Thus, as expressed by one participant: “We all work towards the NAPLAN” (ST2) to enhance the school’s positioning, with the words ‘we all’ including teachers in the ECEC years.

Analysis of policy influences evident in both the documentary and interview data revealed one dominant theme of policy influences across the data, namely
concerns about the school’s positioning, with a contributory sub-theme of the push for improved educational outcomes. The competitive and comparative discourses found throughout the school’s literacy policy were indicative of dominant neoliberal underpinnings.

**Context of Policy Text Production**

This section presents the findings from analysis of the context of policy text production. Below is a table that summarises the themes and sub-themes identified in the documentary and interview data from this case study, namely TPS.

Table 10.2. Themes and Sub-Themes Identified in the Analysis of Context of Policy Text Production at the Micro (Local: School) Level (TPS).

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<tr>
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<th>Themes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Documentary data</td>
<td>Disjointed policy</td>
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<td>Commanding policy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Definitions of literacy</td>
<td>Variations in definitions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ECEC is important</td>
<td>Education focus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview data</td>
<td>Commanding policy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Disjointed policy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Evolving policy</td>
<td>Student profile</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Definitions of literacy</td>
<td>Variations in definitions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ECEC is important</td>
<td>Education focus</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Division</td>
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Analysis of policy text production of documentary data revealed two dominant themes, namely disjointed policy and commanding policy. Relevant to areas of policy investigated in this study, analysis revealed the dominant themes of
definitions of literacy, with a contributory sub-theme of variations in definitions, and ECEC is important, with a contributory sub-theme of education focus.

Written policy at TPS was found to be disjointed. The TPS Whole School Literacy Plan (TPS, 2012) was a document that comprised a series of separate sections, with each section being written by different people through differing processes and in different stages of completion. One section, titled “Language and Literacy” (TPS, 2012, p. 1-2), had been written in the previous year by two teachers, who were no longer at the school. The section titled “Whole school literacy planning: assessment overview” (TPS, 2012, p. 3) had been compiled the previous year through consultation with an expert outside of the school. The section titled “TPS English Operational Plan 2012-2013” (TPS, 2012, p. 4-5) had been written by members of the newly re-formed Literacy Committee earlier in the year of data collection. There were sections that each comprised a strategic plan, one titled “KP1” (TPS, 2012, p. 6), for Kindergarten, Pre-Primary and Year 1, and another titled “2/3” (TPS, 2012, p. 7), for Years Two and Three. Each had been written by staff in the respective year levels. Other ‘strategic plans’ for remaining years at TPS, these being Four, Five, Six and Seven, were omitted, presumed still to be written.

Although disjointed in production, the TPS Whole School Literacy Plan (TPS, 2012) was commanding throughout. Each section used managerial and task-oriented discourses that left minimal room for partial-compliance, with these discourses being reflective of the underlying neoliberal ideology. For instance, the section titled “Language and Literacy” (TPS, 2012, p. 1-2) used directive, task-oriented statements to provide direction on what and how literacy was to be taught at TPS, such as in: “students need to be explicitly taught” (TPS, 2012, p. 2). Use of modal verbs, such as ‘need’, and present tense statements reinforced the directive
tone. Task-oriented discourses were also evident in other sections of the written policy in the use of flow diagrams, such as in that titled “Whole school literacy planning: assessment overview” (TPS, 2012, p. 3), and tables, such as in the strategic plans. These layouts conveyed the impression that completion of the listed tasks was non-negotiable, with this adding to the directive nature of the policy. The section titled “TPS English Operational Plan 2012-2013” (TPS, 2012, p. 4-5), used managerial discourses to detail the resource allocation for literacy related activities during the year. Present tense commands gave the impression that the stated tasks, and the teachers’ participation in them, had already happened.

The definitions of literacy that framed the TPS Whole School Literacy Plan (TPS, 2012) were variable throughout. For instance, in the section titled “Language and Literacy” (TPS, 2012, p. 1-2), literacy was defined by modes, namely “reading, writing and speaking and listening” (TPS, 2012, p. 1), with the addition of “spelling and language conventions” (TPS, 2012, p. 1), the latter two being areas assessed in NAPLAN. The section titled “Whole school literacy planning: assessment overview” (TPS, 2012, p. 3) listed literacy assessments, but had no definition of literacy, and the section titled “TPS English Operational Plan 2012-2013” (TPS, 2012, p. 4-5) described literacy as “handwriting and reading” (TPS, 2012, p. 4). Definitions of literacy differed in each of the sections that detailed strategic plans in the policy. The section titled “KP1” (TPS, 2012, p. 6) defined literacy using language similar to the Australian Curriculum: Version 2.0 (ACARA, 2011a) namely “Language, Literature” and “Literacy” (TPS, 2012, p. 6), but with no other explanation, while the section titled “2/3” (TPS, 2012, p. 7) defined literacy by modes, similarly to the aforementioned section titled “Language and Literacy” (TPS, 2012, p. 1-2), once again giving minimal explanations. There was no unifying written definition of
literacy. Achieving a consistent and clear definition of literacy in policy at TPS was clearly difficult.

There was explicit inclusion of the ECEC years in the *TPS Whole School Literacy Plan* (TPS, 2012). This accorded an important role to the ECEC years in the achievement of improved outcomes in literacy. For instance, in the section titled “Language and Literacy” (TPS, 2012, p. 1-2) there was explicit recognition of the “early” phase of learning (TPS, 2012, p. 1) and in the section titled “Whole school literacy planning: assessment overview” (TPS, 2012, p. 3), there was inclusion of the On-Entry Assessment Program in the list of ‘mandated’ assessments to be administered in TPS. The *TPS Whole School Literacy Plan* (TPS, 2012) also included a section specific for the ECEC years, namely “KP1” (TPS, 2012, p. 6). This section presented a unified ECEC in an educative focus which emphasised literacy.

Analysis of policy text production of the interview data revealed dominant themes that were commanding policy, disjointed policy and evolving policy, with a contributory sub-theme of student profile. Relevant to specific areas of policy under investigation in this study, the interview data revealed the dominant themes of definitions of literacy, with a contributory sub-theme of variations in definitions, and ECEC is important, with contributory sub-themes of education focus and division.

A School Leader declared: “*That is our whole school literacy plan ... you do it ... it is mandated*” (ST7). The word ‘mandated’ added strength to the commanding nature of the policy. There seemed minimal room for negotiations by teachers on the school’s literacy policy. Such direction, and control by the leadership, appeared to be
acceptable to some teachers, with one participant commenting: “I want specifics” (ST1) in policy.

Although commanding, participants revealed that policy at TPS was disjointed in production, being in an apparent continuous state of change and evolution. For instance, a participant commented: “Policies are constantly changed” (ST5) and another participant similarly said: “Things keep changing” (ST4). To some participants, it seemed that the school was: “searching for the right answer” (ST3) and engaged in what another participant described as: “a lot of debate” (ST4) on how to improve the school’s apparent lagging results in literacy. It seemed to one participant that: “The school keeps grabbing the latest fad” (ST6) to improve performances. The school seemed to constantly change policy without fully integrating the new ideas into the existing policy.

Participants revealed that changes in the school’s student profile seemed to be contributing to the need for change in the school’s literacy policy. One participant said: “I know our clientele [student population] has changed” (ST3), and another similarly commented: “There’s been a change in demographic” (ST7) of the student population from a high socioeconomic to a lower socioeconomic background, this being attributed to changes in the demographic of families buying into the area. Staff believed that these changes in the student profile contributed to the school’s continued ‘poor’ performances in NAPLAN. This further underscored the need for change in school literacy policy.

Some participants revealed that the task of defining literacy to frame literacy policy was difficult at TPS. For instance, one leader declared literacy was: “such an enormous area” (ST7) and: “There are so many different approaches” (ST7) to literacy teaching. In addition, the large, and growing, staff added further
complexities as, according to this same participant: “You end up in a school this size with people having a smorgasbord and a diverse range of strategies” (ST7); that is, there were variable notions of literacy and how to teach it. In such a context, it seemed to this participant that bringing together all these views to create a consistent definition of literacy remained a complex, and seemingly unachievable, task.

Some participants commented upon the important role of the ECEC years in contributing to the pursuit of literacy improvements. Accordingly, one participant explained: “We are coming to the realisation that from Kindergarten to Year Seven needs to be in the whole school literacy plan” (ST2), so including the ECEC years in an educative focus in whole school planning for improvements. However, some participants perceived tensions, particularly emerging from a perception of divisions between the ECEC years and the remainder of the school. For instance, although all staff, including those in ECEC, analysed the NAPLAN data, only the ECEC staff in the non-compulsory years analysed data from the On-Entry Assessment Program. One participant, a Pre-Primary teacher, said: “I would love to see the whole school analysing our On-Entry Assessment Program data” (ST3). It seemed to her that this would communicate that the non-compulsory years were genuinely recognised as being important, and included, in school literacy policy processes.

Analysis of policy text production in both the documentary and interview data revealed dominant themes of disjointed policy and commanding policy. The interview data revealed an additional dominant theme of evolving policy and a contributory sub-theme of student profile. Relevant to particular policy aspects investigated in this study, analysis of the documentary and interview data identified the dominant themes of definitions of literacy, with a contributory sub-theme of variations in definitions, and ECEC is important, with the contributory sub-theme
of *education focus*. The interview data also revealed an additional contributory sub-theme of *division*.

**Context of Policy Practices (Enactment)**

This section presents the findings from analysis of the context of policy practices (enactment). Below is a table that summarises the themes and sub-themes identified in the documentary and interview data from this case study, namely TPS.

Table 10.3. Themes and Sub-Themes Identified in the Analysis of Context of Policy Practices (Enactment) at the Micro (Local: School) Level (TPS).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Documentary data</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership challenges</td>
<td></td>
<td>Professional learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data driven practices</td>
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<td>Accountability</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview data</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership challenges</td>
<td></td>
<td>Causing problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional learning</td>
<td></td>
<td>Explicit content</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data driven practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
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The analysis of policy practices (enactment) of the documentary data identified various dominant themes that were *leadership challenges*, with a contributory sub-theme of *professional learning* and *data driven practices*, with a contributory sub-theme of *accountability*.

The documentary data yielded evidence that the leadership of the school was struggling to create and lead coherent literacy policy at TPS. The *TPS Whole School Literacy Plan* (TPS, 2012) had been written by various people, but not the
recognised leaders. Sections of the *TPS Whole School Literacy Plan* (TPS, 2012) had been written in collaboration with consultants, sourced through professional learning, while other sections of the document were written by groups of teachers. There were no unifying statements by the leaders themselves.

It was evident in the documentary data that literacy teaching was being predominantly driven by data rather than teacher judgements. The *TPS Whole School Literacy Plan* (TPS, 2012) placed targets for improved outcomes early in the text, repeating them later, with most using performance indicators based upon NAPLAN. The impression was that these targets, and the data they were based upon, were intended to frame literacy teaching practices. The section titled “Whole school literacy planning: assessment overview” (TPS, 2012, p. 3) was a list of assessments that teachers were to administer in monitoring students’ progress towards these targets. These assessments provided the school with a means by which to make teachers accountable towards achievement of these targets. Some reference was made to the use of teacher judgements in assessing students’ progress in literacy in the statement: “80% of teacher judgement is correct” (TPS, 2012, p. 3). However, this statement was located in a small speech bubble adjacent to coloured filled boxes that highlighted the assessments, making the assessments appear as more important in capturing students’ literacy learning.

Analysis of policy practices (enactment) evident in the interview data revealed the dominant themes of **leadership challenges** and **professional learning**, with a contributory sub-theme of **causing problems**. The dominant themes of **data driven practices**, with **explicit content** identified as a contributory sub-theme, and **accountability** also emerged.
Participants’ comments revealed that leaders were experiencing challenge and struggle in their literacy leadership. According to a participant, the leaders were: “working out the nuts and bolts” (ST3) of school literacy policy. However, according to one of the leaders themselves: “There is no one that is saying ‘this is what we are doing’” (ST5); that is, no one was perceived as bringing it together and leading. Participants’ believed that an effective literacy leader required expert knowledge, confidence, designated time and be perceived as a leader by staff. Not having such an identified person at TPS was perceived as an obstacle to effective literacy policy processes. For instance, one leader declared: “It [effective literacy policy processes] needs one person who feels confident enough to be that literacy leader and we don’t have that literacy leader” (ST7), declaring further: “I am no expert in literacy either” (ST7). Another participant, who was also a member of the literacy leadership team, expressed the opinion that their status as a relatively new staff member did not give them leadership credentials in the eyes of the staff. This leader also had classroom duties and, in the opinion of another leader, leadership challenges were compounded through lack of sufficient time for this person to perform this role, commenting: “[The Teacher Leader] didn’t get any time” (ST6).

Many staff at TPS sought professional learning to enrich their knowledge about effective literacy teaching to achieve improved outcomes. For instance, staff had recently attending professional learning provided by the WA Primary Principals’ Association. Consequently, a literacy teaching framework was being trialled in the school. Thus, engagement in professional learning brought new ideas to the pursuit of improved outcomes. However, the practice of engaging in professional learning was creating tensions. Ideas learnt were being added to the policy but not fully integrated. For instance, one participant said:
People [staff] go off to different things [professional learning]. And they come back and say, ‘oh we should do this’. Lots of discussion happens ... but you have got so many people offering ideas and suggestions. That’s [external advice] really great but then how does that fit? (ST5).

This participant concluded that the advice sought and received through professional learning: “poses more questions than helping” (ST5). Another participant also said: “It [professional learning] muddied the waters” (ST7).

Participant comments revealed that literacy teaching at TPS was being data driven, with the impression that this was in deference to the use of teacher judgements. Staff members at TPS were frequently engaged in analysis of data on students’ performances in literacy, using mainly data from NAPLAN, but also from the On-Entry Assessment Program. This, in turn, provided specific foci for teachers in what to teach in literacy to shape improved performances in future testing. For instance, one participant explained that:

*The school has paid for the First Cut [software to analyse NAPLAN results] and ... you can go in and pinpoint specifically: This was the area that the Year Threes struggled in, this was the particular question. What was the understanding behind that and what are some activities that you could do to help build that with the students?* (ST5).

The participant continued to explain that the analysis produced specific information about what to teach; that is, information “for future planning” (ST5) for teaching to
improve the results in the next round of assessments. There was no mention of the use of teacher judgements in informing literacy teaching.

Furthermore, comments revealed that data from the On-Entry Assessment Program was being used similarly to frame literacy teaching in the ECEC years. One of the participants explained: “We [Pre-Primary and Kindergarten Teachers] have had two meetings with the people from the department [DoE (WA)] who have explained the data [from On-Entry Assessment Program] to us” (ST3). Subsequently, as another participant commented, ECEC teachers at TPS were: “Mapping it [the results from On-Entry Assessment Program] back to what was needed in teaching” (ST4). This was further explained by another participant: “The Kindergarten teachers mapped it [the results from On-Entry Assessment Program] back to what is needed there too” (ST3). There was an assumption at TPS that the literacy skills assessed through the On-Entry Assessment Program, administered to students in Pre-Primary, and planned to be administered for students in Years One and Two, were foundational to literacy skills assessed through NAPLAN. Thus, using data from students’ performances in the On-Entry Assessment Program to inform future teaching, even in Kindergarten, was perceived as supporting students to develop the necessary skills to enable sound performances when they engaged in NAPLAN in later years.

Results of this data analysis were then being used to persuade teachers to explicitly teach literacy content in the ECEC years. For instance, one participant commented that teachers in ECEC needed to: “Up the ante in what we are teaching in terms of content ... more explicit nature of teaching in early childhood” (ST2). The leadership was encouraging all teachers, including those in Kindergarten and Pre-Primary, to implement a literacy teaching framework and timetable set times for
explicit teaching. Interview data revealed tensions, particularly in the non-compulsory years. For instance, one Kindergarten teacher commented: “We decided that what we [in Kindergarten] are doing currently is better [than the literacy teaching framework]” (ST1), with another questioning the need to teach literacy content explicitly, saying: “Why do I need to break it [literacy] down?” (ST2).

Teacher participants in Pre-Primary commented similarly. For instance, one said: “As early childhood teachers we have always been good at integrating across the curriculum” (ST3), positioning integration of content as opposing explicit teaching of content in literacy. Another said: “I have always had that [integration]. Why do I need to change?” (ST4). It seemed from these comments that the ECEC teachers in the non-compulsory years at TPS believed that data driven practices were creating pressure for inclusion of more explicit teaching of specific literacy content. They deemed this unnecessary, and possibly in conflict with, ECEC literacy pedagogy to which they subscribed.

There was also increasing accountability on teachers with regards to their engagement with school literacy policy processes. Participants revealed that the Principal of the school had recently appointed himself the line manager for ECEC teachers in the non-compulsory years. One participant described this as: “performance management for accountability” (ST7), and it represented exertion of control by the leadership over the ECEC years. Some ECEC teachers commented positively about, and seemed accepting of this, seeing it as an opportunity to inform the leadership about ECEC. For instance, one said: “For the Principal to be our line manager is a really good thing. The Principal talks about … how much the Principal has learnt and about how the Principal … is more aware of what happens” (ST3). In addition, the school had funded professional learning for teachers to re-skill staff in
analysing data from each NAPLAN and the On-Entry Assessment Program. Such funding increased the pressure on, and accountability for, teachers to engage in data driven literacy teaching, and accorded further power to the leadership.

Analysis of policy practices (enactment) of both the documentary and interview data revealed two dominant themes of leadership challenges and data driven practices. The themes of professional learning and accountability, identified as contributory sub-themes in the documentary data, emerged as dominant in the interview data. In addition, interview data revealed a contributory sub-theme of causing problems, within the dominant theme of professional learning, and the contributory sub-theme explicit content, within the dominant theme of data driven practices.

Context of Policy Outcomes

This section presents the findings from analysis of the context of policy outcomes. Below is a table that summarises the themes and sub-themes identified in the documentary and interview data from this case study, namely TPS.
Table 10.4. Themes and Sub-Themes Identified in the Analysis of Context of Policy
Outcomes at the Micro (Local: School) Level (TPS).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Documentary data</strong></td>
<td>Disempowerment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Whole school planning</td>
<td>ECEC inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Literacy narrowed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interview data</strong></td>
<td>Disempowerment</td>
<td>Frustration with constant change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Literacy narrowed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ECEC inclusion</td>
<td>Pedagogical change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of policy outcomes in the documentary data revealed evidence of dominant themes that were **disempowerment**, **whole school planning**, with a contributory sub-theme of **ECEC inclusion**, and **literacy narrowed**. Overall, the **TPS Whole School Literacy Plan** (TPS, 2012), an incoherent and disjointed document, created the impression that leaders were challenged by, and struggled in, producing this document. It was evidence of a leadership that was disempowered. In what was there, the policy was positioned as a whole of school approach to literacy, with the explicit inclusion of the ECEC years in plans for improvements. All phases of learning, including the ‘early phase’, were explicitly recognised as having roles in the policy.

The working definition of literacy in the **TPS Whole School Literacy Plan** (TPS, 2012) emphasised skills to be explicitly taught to achieve targets, mostly based upon NAPLAN performances, in deference to broad, integrated definitions. The impression conveyed by the documents was that at TPS, what was assessed mattered in literacy, and this was what was to be taught. This also de-emphasised
teacher judgements in this process. This finding was informed through the inclusion in the written policy of an extensive list of literacy assessments that were prominent over statements about teacher judgements. The subsequent focus in the policy on literacy teaching practices towards improved performances in these assessments, including NAPLAN, meant that many aspects of literacy, such as critical, digital and multimodal literacy, were missing from the definition of literacy at TPS. One section of the documentation briefly mentioned the strands of literacy as presented in the Australian Curriculum: Version 2.0 (ACARA, 2011a), but did not expand on them or include the need to integrate literacy across the curriculum, as was detailed in The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Version 3.0 (ACARA, 2011b). No reference was made to the definition of literacy found in EYLF (DEEWR for COAG, 2009), thereby omitting modes of literacy such as dance, music and visual literacy.

Analysis of policy outcomes in the interview data revealed a dominant theme of disempowerment, with contributory sub-theme of frustration with constant change. The themes of literacy narrowed and ECEC inclusion, with a contributory sub-theme of pedagogical change, also emerged.

The leadership at TPS was struggling to lead the school in improving their local, State and national competitive positioning and, consequently, policy was constantly changing. Participants believed that DoE (WA) was exerting pressures on the school to enhance their positioning but was not providing explicit guidelines as to how this was to be achieved. For instance, one leader declared in exasperation: “I think it would be easier if the department [DoE (WA)] made that decision [about school literacy policy processes]” (ST5). Another leader agreed, saying: “I think we need a lot more guidance then we are getting. The level of support [from DoE (WA)] is the lowest it has been for decades. We have been left to fend for ourselves” (ST7).
As they ‘fended for themselves’ to achieve improved outcomes in literacy, leaders at TPS appeared distrusting of their own knowledge base. They engaged in numerous consultations outside of the school and encouraged teachers to engage in similar practices. However, leaders seemed unable to use the knowledge gained in creating stable and coherent school literacy policy. The leaders perceived themselves to be ‘failing’, as despite attempts to exert control, through practices such as accountability through performance management processes, results were not improving. One leader commented: “We are doing something wrong” (ST6), using the lack of improvement in the school’s NAPLAN results as evidence of their ‘failure’.

One leader labelled constant change as a contributory issue to persistently ‘poor’ NAPLAN results, saying: “The issue has had to be that we have been modifying and making changes” (ST6) but without the changes “being delivered long enough to see results” (ST6). It seemed that, according to another leader, the school’s literacy policy was: “Going around in circles” (ST7) so that, as commented upon by another participant, there was: “A lack of clarity” (ST1) in the school’s literacy policy. Consequently, a participant observed: “I think people get a bit fed up” (ST5) of all the changes, and continued: “There is great resistance” (ST5), the words ‘fed up’ and ‘resistance’ being indicative of the frustration with change amongst the staff. This frustration was expressed by other participants. For instance, one said: “Things keep changing” (ST2), with another teacher expressing the belief that constant changes were “responsible for the plan being … delayed” (ST1), here expressing the notion that possibly a ‘completed’ written policy would alleviate the frustration, and subsequently achieve the desired improvements.
Through the constant evolution in policy, together with data driven policy practices, literacy was becoming narrowed to something that could be measured and taught explicitly. In effect, teachers at TPS were being re-focused, and disempowered, in their literacy teaching to emphasise data over teacher judgements, this occurring through the dominant practices that involved the analysis and use of data from NAPLAN results and the On-Entry Assessment Program. Funding these practices allowed the leadership to exert some control in how teachers were defining, and teaching, literacy in the school which, in turn, further disempowered teachers and reinforced the notion that literacy was defined by this narrow set of assessments.

This narrowing of literacy was a source of concern for some. For instance, according to one of the participants, literacy was an “enormous area” (ST7) which necessitated breadth and diversity in definition, and of approaches, in the school literacy policy; something that seemed difficult to achieve at TPS. Some ECEC teachers expressed feelings of unease in regards to implementation of the literacy teaching framework in the school. They described this as perpetuating a focus on explicit teaching of skills in literacy which was not in tune with their understanding of the need to integrate literacy beyond individual skills.

There was increasing inclusion of ECEC in whole school literacy policy at TPS, this reflecting the belief that improvements in outcomes in ECEC will then yield the desired outcomes when these students engaged in NAPLAN in later years. However, this inclusion was also bringing perceived pressure for pedagogical change in ECEC, particularly in the non-compulsory years of Kindergarten and Pre-Primary, away from implementing mainly traditional play-based teaching to including more explicit teaching of literacy. Some staff viewed these changes positively, while others were wary. As a way of addressing concerns and maintaining control, ECEC
teachers expressed the desire to participate in the school’s literacy policy processes. For instance, one stated: “We could certainly start the conversation” (ST2). Another participant said: “We need to be sharing ways of doing that, which is [are] respectful of our early childhood culture” (ST1). In maintaining this ‘early childhood culture’, some participants proposed what they termed a “balance” (ST1, ST2) to reconcile pedagogy espoused through the school’s literacy policy with that traditionally associated with ECEC. For instance, one participant, a Kindergarten teacher, commented: “As long as we keep the balance” (ST1), with another, a Pre-Primary teacher saying: “I think striking that balance [in pedagogy] is the absolute key. Not throwing out play and balance [play] with [the] explicit nature of teaching” (ST2).

Analysis of policy outcomes of both the documentary and interview data identified dominant themes of disempowerment, with the interview data revealing a contributory sub-theme of frustration with constant change. While the theme of whole school planning, with a contributory sub-theme of ECEC inclusion, was identified in the documentary data, there was a shift in the interview data which revealed additional richness of information. ECEC inclusion became dominant, with pedagogical change being a contributory sub-theme. The theme of literacy narrowed dominated both the documentary and interview data.

Concluding Discussion

This chapter has presented the findings from analysis of data of the third case study school investigated at the micro (local) level of the literacy policy trajectory under investigation in this study, namely TPS. TPS is a large, growing regional public primary school with an experienced staff.
Analysis of documentary and interview data revealed that the school literacy policy at TPS was being principally influenced by the desire to enhance the school’s local, State and national competitive positioning in literacy, through improved outcomes in literacy in NAPLAN, intended to begin in ECEC. These neoliberal values were found to be in response to perceived pressures from the State policy elite.

Leaders and teachers at TPS were thus engaged in a seemingly constant search for the ‘answers’ to achieve improvements in literacy. This was creating disjointed and evolving school literacy policy at TPS, compounded by changes in the student demographics and frequent engagement with consultants outside of the school. Nevertheless, results seemed to not improve and staff expressed feelings of frustration. Leaders at TPS presented as disempowered in their literacy leadership. They perceived themselves as having inadequate knowledge to lead literacy, constantly seeking advice elsewhere.

However, leaders maintained a commanding tone in the school’s literacy policy. This was being partly reinforced through data driven literacy policy practices to frame literacy teaching, including in the ECEC years. Data-driven literacy teaching practices were also serving to de-emphasise the use of teacher judgements in assessing, and informing teaching for, students’ literacy learning. This, in the context of various accountability mechanisms which also included teachers in the ECEC years, was contributing to disempower ECEC teachers in their literacy teaching.

Furthermore, these practices were viewed as exerting pressure for change away from implementing mainly traditional play-based pedagogy to more inclusion of explicit teaching of literacy content in the ECEC years, particularly in the non-
compulsory years of Kindergarten and Pre-Primary. Some ECEC teachers believed that actively participating in school literacy policy processes would allow them to maintain control and subsequent achievement of a ‘balance’ in pedagogy.

An outcome of school literacy policy processes at TPS was narrowing of the working definition of literacy to something that can be measured by specific tests, with these being NAPLAN and, to a lesser extent, On-Entry Assessment Program. Furthermore, many broader aspects of literacy, such as critical and digital literacy, were ‘missing’ from the school’s literacy policy and this was in tension with definitions found in national curriculum documents.

This chapter presented an analysis of the school literacy policy processes at the third of the case study schools in this investigation, namely TPS, with a focus on ECEC teachers. Although features of the school’s setting were found to have an impact on various aspects of school literacy policy processes, competitive neoliberal influences emanating from the broader policy context dominated throughout. The next chapter will present the findings from the meta-analysis along the whole of the literacy policy trajectory investigated.
Chapter Eleven

Meta-analysis Along the Policy Trajectory and Discussion:

Global to Local Levels

Introduction

The aim of this study was to investigate the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on early childhood education and care (ECEC) teachers. A policy trajectory approach (Ball, 1994; Vidovich, 2013) framed the research questions for the investigation, located in selected public schools in the State of Western Australia (WA). The previous five chapters presented findings from analysis within different levels of the literacy policy trajectory investigated, namely macro (national: Australia), meso (State: WA) and micro (local: school). This chapter presents a meta-analysis and discussion of the findings along the whole literacy policy trajectory investigated.

Emergent Themes Across the Policy Trajectory

Empirical data was not collected from international sources. Global trends, as referred to and described in Chapters Two and Three, constituted part of the overall context within which data collection and analysis were conducted.

Analysis of policy processes at the macro (national: Australian) and meso (State: WA) levels considered two contexts of the policy trajectory, these being policy influences and policy text production (Ball, 1994; Vidovich, 2013). These findings set the broad milieu for analysis at the micro (local: school) level of the literacy policy trajectory investigated. Data collection and analysis through the three case study schools at the micro (local: school) level considered four contexts of the policy trajectory: namely, policy influences, policy text production, policy practices
(enactment) and policy outcomes (Ball, 1994; Vidovich, 2013). Details of each school’s setting were also included using a typology of contextual dimensions, provided by Braun, Ball, Maguire and Hoskins (2011).

Below, Table 11.1 provides a summary of the themes and sub-themes identified across the literacy policy trajectory investigated for each of the contexts, namely policy influences, policy text production, policy practices (enactment) and longer term policy outcomes.
Table 11.1. Summary of Themes and Sub-Themes across the Literacy Policy Trajectory Investigated. *NB: Sub-themes are dot pointed and italicised.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MACRO</th>
<th>MESO</th>
<th>MICRO</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RDHS</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>SPS</td>
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<td>TPS</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context of Policy Influences</td>
<td>Australia’s international competitive positioning</td>
<td>WA’s competitive positioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality &amp; equity as key goals</td>
<td>Quality &amp; equity as key goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparent broad consultation</td>
<td>Commanding policy</td>
<td>Commanding policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy is foundational</td>
<td>Literacy is important</td>
<td>Literacy is important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy is foundational</td>
<td>Literacy is important</td>
<td>Literacy is important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECEC is foundational</td>
<td>ECEC is important</td>
<td>ECEC is important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context of Policy Text Production</td>
<td>Data driven literacy teaching practices</td>
<td>Data driven literacy teaching practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership challenges</td>
<td>Leadership challenges</td>
<td>Leadership challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context of Longer Term Policy Outcomes</td>
<td>Changes in teachers’ literacy work</td>
<td>Changes in teachers’ literacy work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy is narrowed</td>
<td>Literacy is narrowed</td>
<td>Literacy is narrowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECEC becomes part of the school</td>
<td>ECEC becomes part of the school</td>
<td>ECEC becomes part of the school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The chapter is structured around the four contexts of the policy trajectory, with each section following a similar format. After restating the relevant research question, themes and sub-themes are considered in light of the literature in order to generate propositions about the findings. It is important to emphasise that there is no attempt to generalise from the findings specific to this study. However, the propositions aim to provide ‘food for thought’ and a possible foundation for critical reflection in other jurisdictions.

**Research Question One: The Context of Policy Influences**

What are the key influences on literacy policy identified along the policy trajectory, at macro (national: Australia), meso (State: WA) and micro (local: school) levels?

There was one dominant theme of policy influences across the whole policy trajectory investigated, namely concerns about **competitive positioning**, be this at an international, national, State or local level. The theme of **quality and equity as key goals** was also identified. It was not as prominent as the first theme as it was not evident as a theme of policy influences at the micro (local: school) level. Each theme is discussed below with links made to the literature.

The dominant theme of policy influences identified along the policy trajectory was concerns about **competitive positioning**. This substantial influence draws together the themes of ‘Australia’s international competitive positioning’ at the macro (national: Australian) level, ‘WA’s competitive positioning’ at the meso (State: WA) level and ‘school’s competitive positioning’ in each of the schools at the micro (local: school) level.
The study found that literacy policy in Australia was principally influenced by the forces of competition, this reflecting an underlying neoliberal ideology that pervaded national, State and school literacy policy processes. The neoliberal focus on competitiveness drove the push for improved outcomes in literacy through all levels of the policy trajectory investigated, and also underpinned pressures for accountability for improvements.

Analysis of the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), 2008), hereafter called the *Melbourne Declaration*, found that the national policy elite instigated a national educational reform agenda that aimed to enhance Australia’s international competitiveness. With this policy, education was firmly placed on the nation’s economic agenda as the Australian education system was positioned to prepare Australian citizens to participate, and compete, in the global knowledge economy. The national policy elite used Australia’s international positioning, at times as measured and reported upon through the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA), in persuasive rationales for this national neoliberal based educational reform agenda. PISA is the international survey of literacy (and numeracy) achievements of 15 year olds that has been conducted by the OECD every three years since 2000. The influence of the push to enhance Australia’s international status through improved literacy outcomes pervaded the entire literacy policy trajectory investigated in this study. Neoliberal ideology, exemplified by discourses such as competitive and comparative (Connell, 2013; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Teodoro & Estrela, 2010; Welch, 2010; Youdell, 2004), was found to dominate written literacy policy from national through State and to school levels.
These neoliberal discourses were predominantly in relation to the National Assessment Program-Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), a national testing regime instigated by the national policy elite. The results from NAPLAN, administered in Years Three, Five, Seven and Nine of school, are made available to the public through the MySchool website (https://www.myschool.edu.au/), which was also established and managed by the national policy elite. This website allows for ‘customers’ to make comparisons between schools.

Through policy, the State policy elite established goals and targets for schools based on NAPLAN. In turn, the majority of targets in school literacy policy documents were based on NAPLAN. The influential force of NAPLAN on policy was commented upon by many participants throughout the policy trajectory investigated. Furthermore, some participants at the school level in each case study site commented that achieving ‘good’ performances in NAPLAN was the primary aim of school literacy policy. Hardy (2015), in a report of ongoing research located in the State of Queensland, Australia, similarly found that NAPLAN was a significant influence on school policy, as did Kerkham and Comber (2016), whose research was located in the State of South Australia, Australia.

Furthermore, many of the participants in this study commented that all teachers were responsible for achieving good performances in NAPLAN. This included those teaching in the ECEC years, even though these students were not assessed through NAPLAN until later years. In the ECEC years in the schools investigated, there was another assessment regime, namely the On-Entry Assessment Program. Mandated by the Department of Education (DoE) (WA) for administration to students in Pre-Primary, all schools investigated were planning to also administer relevant modules of this test for students in Year One, with some planning for Year
Two. Administered by the teacher, the assessment includes evaluation of aspects of
the child’s literacy in the areas of speaking, listening, reading and writing. There
were explicit references made and/or targets in written school literacy policy in
relation to the On-Entry Assessment Program across the three case study schools.
Participants indicated that results from this programme were going to be used to
monitor students’ progress towards good results in NAPLAN, the perception being
that this ‘tracking’ would enable targeted teaching to then ensure good performances
when these students engaged with NAPLAN. Thus, neoliberal ideology that
underpinned the drive for improved outcomes in literacy was also influencing school
literacy policy relevant to the ECEC years. Similarly, Bradbury (2011, 2013, 2014)
reported how pressures for improved outcomes were influencing implementation of
an early childhood assessment regime in schools in England.

In one school investigated in this study at the micro (local: school) level of
the literacy policy trajectory, participants revealed that publicly available results
were being used by parents to inform their school choice. This school was an
Independent Public School (IPS) and so more students meant more funding from the
DoE (WA). This reinforced the need for the school to enhance competitiveness,
particularly in the local market. Achieving ‘good’ performances in NAPLAN was
thus necessary; that is, it was “desirable capital” (Hardy, 2016, p. 101). The evidence
of parental choice discourse (Connell & Dados, 2014; Lingard, 2011; Proctor &
Sriprakash, 2013; Youdell, 2004) in this case exemplified how schools were
becoming marketised in response to competitive neoliberal influences (Brennan,

Thus, the study revealed how neoliberalism was influencing literacy policy in
relation to literacy education in the ECEC years in schools, and contributing to the
emergence of market logic in schools, such as parental choice discourse. These findings are in keeping with the literature in relation to educational policy in general (Apple, 2006, 2011; Clarke, 2012; Connell, 2013; Gibbon & Folke Henriksen, 2012; Lakes & Carter, 2011; Lupton, 2011; Olssen, 2004; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Sellar & Lingard, 2013; Teodoro & Estrela, 2010; Welch, 2010; Winter, 2012; Youdell, 2004). Various researchers also highlight the particularly influential role of the OECD’s PISA programme in the educational policies of nations (Ball, Maguire, Braun, Perryman & Hoskins, 2012; Ozga & Lingard, 2007; Sellar & Lingard, 2013, 2014; Teodoro & Estrela, 2010; Yates & Young, 2010). Performances in PISA continue to be used by the national policy elite as a persuasive force in influencing Australian education policy in the push for improved educational outcomes (Gorur & Wu, 2015).

Participants’ comments at the micro (local: school) level indicated that the neoliberal competitive influences on school literacy policy were perceived as almost inevitable; that is, schools had to ‘keep up’, such were the pressures felt. The policy elite in Australia are thus being accorded with a degree of power to influence literacy education in the ECEC years in schools. Internationally, and in Australia, researchers similarly found that teachers in various settings are predominantly accepting of neoliberal influences on educational policy (Ball, 2003; Bradbury, 2012; Kilderry, 2015; Youdell, 2004) and modifying their teaching and assessment practices accordingly (Brown & Weber, 2016; Brown, Weber & Yoon, 2015).

The second, but less prevalent, theme of policy influences identified along the policy trajectory investigated was that of quality and equity as key goals within the push for improved outcomes. Although not articulated at the micro (local: school) level of the literacy policy trajectory, this theme is significant. The study
found that the goals of both quality and equity were being used by the policy elite at the national and State levels to strengthen rationales for neoliberal based educational reform. Thus, they contributed as policy influences within the broad milieu in which policy enactment occurred at the school level.

The goals of quality and equity were each articulated within national and State written policy and participants within these levels made references to both. Quality and equity were each predominantly framed within neoliberal terms when referring to both literacy and ECEC. For instance, quality was often equated with achieving excellent standards in literacy, especially those established against NAPLAN. Although equity was framed in terms of access and social justice at times, it was found to be more frequently embedded within neoliberal discourses of efficiency and effectiveness.

These findings are in keeping with commentary in the literature that quality and equity are being used as persuasive rationales in Australian educational policy, this being reflective of underpinning neoliberal values (Lingard, 2010; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Savage, 2011). Researchers argue that equity is subsequently becoming re-articulated as a measure of performance (Lingard, 2011; Lingard, Sellar & Savage, 2014) and quality is being equated with excellence against measurable and reportable key indicators (Fenech, 2011; Moss, Dahlberg & Pence, 2013). Each concept is thus increasingly defined in the context of efficient production of standardised test scores (Anagnostopoulos, Lingard & Sellar, 2016). Subsequently, there is increasing emphasis on economic achievement rather than socially democratic values in Australian education (Comber & Nixon, 2009; Mosen-Lowe, Vidovich & Chapman, 2009).
From the meta-analysis of policy influences on school literacy policy from multiple levels of the policy trajectory, two key propositions were developed and these are presented below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFLUENCES</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Proposition 1:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The competitive ideology of neoliberalism that pervades the literacy policy trajectory from national to State to local levels in Australia is serving to create in schools a concerted drive for improved outcomes in literacy to be measured by testing regimes, beginning with the ECEC years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proposition 2:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The influence of neoliberal ideology in educational policy is serving to increasingly reconfigure the discourses of quality and equity in competitive, economic terms.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question Two: The Context of Policy Text Production

What are the main characteristics of literacy policy texts at macro (national: Australia), meso (State: WA) and micro (local: school) levels and how are they produced?

There were four dominant themes related to policy text production identified across the entire literacy policy trajectory investigated, namely commanding policy, change, literacy is important and ECEC is important. Each is discussed below separately with links made to the literature. However, it is emphasised that there was significant overlap and intersection between these themes in the context of policy text production.

The first dominant theme identified in policy text production along the literacy policy trajectory investigated was commanding policy. This draws together the themes of ‘apparent broad consultation’ at the macro (national: Australian) level with ‘commanding policy’ identified across all the other levels.

Documentary data and participants at the national level gave the impression of broad consultative processes in literacy policy text production. However, some participants revealed that the national policy elite took ultimate control of these consultation processes, with this underscoring policy with a commanding tone, so ensuring that policy represented the intentions of the national policy elite. Analysis found that the commanding nature of national educational policy was enforced along the literacy policy trajectory at the meso (State: WA) level in two main ways: accountability mechanisms and financial policy levers.

The study identified NAPLAN, the national testing regime that included literacy testing, as the main accountability mechanism for literacy improvements in
Australia. The strength of this testing regime, as a form of accountability, was reinforced through the national policy elite’s establishment of the MySchool website which allows for public viewing and comparisons of NAPLAN results. Thus, these accountability mechanisms put ‘at stake’ the reputations of entire States and Territories, and schools within these jurisdictions. Participants’ comments indicated their perception that the ultimate responsibility for achieving ‘good’ results was consequently placed by the State on schools. NAPLAN had become perceived as an instrument of ‘high-stakes’ accountability and, as NAPLAN measured literacy, so too had literacy become a ‘high-stakes’ issue (Comber, 2011) for States and Territories, and schools.

The study revealed that the ‘high-stakes’ nature of NAPLAN as an accountability mechanism for literacy improvement was further reinforced by financial policy levers. Financial rewards, linked with results in NAPLAN, were being used by the Australian Federal Government over the State and, in turn, over schools. Participants at all levels of the literacy policy trajectory investigated commented about how these financial policy levers reinforced the push for improved outcomes. Compliance with policies was perceived by participants as being obligatory, as non-compliance meant possible loss of funding to the State, and schools. This study thus demonstrated how accountability regimes linked with financial rewards are according the national policy elite in Australia with power to steer ‘at a distance’ literacy policy text production in the ECEC years in schools.

The study’s findings are in keeping with comments in the literature. Researchers argue that through policy text production that instigate accountability regimes focused on testing performances (Brennan, Zipin & Sellar, 2016), the policy elite are enabled to maintain control along the policy trajectory and ‘steer from a
distance’ policy in schools (Gerrard & Farrell, 2013; Lingard, Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2013; Ozga, 2009; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Teodoro & Estrela, 2010). In Australia, this power of the national policy elite is being reinforced by Federal-State ‘partnerships’ that provide funding to States and Territories, and schools, for improved results in testing regimes (Lingard, 2011; Lingard & Sellar, 2013; Welch, 2010). Within this, the ultimate responsibility to achieve improvements thus rests with schools (Youdell, 2004). This is indicative of ‘policy as numbers’ in education (Lingard, 2011; Lingard, Creagh & Vass, 2012; Lingard, Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2013; Ozga, 2009; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) which reflects a global meta-policy of testing and educational measurement (Lingard, Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2013).

The second dominant theme identified in policy text production across all levels of the literacy policy trajectory investigated was change, drawing in the sub-themes of ‘disjointed policy’ and ‘disjointed and evolving policy’ identified at the micro (local: school) level.

Written policy across the literacy policy trajectory investigated positioned change as being necessary for the Australian education system to achieve enhanced international competitiveness. Analysis identified change discourses throughout written policy analysed at the national and State levels, and many participants along the whole policy trajectory commented about the push and/or need for change in literacy policy in the pursuit for improved outcomes.

This study found that the national policy elite added persuasive force for change by positioning change to be to the nation’s benefit. Accordingly, ‘national’ was a major text characteristic identified in national written policy. The change discourse that flowed through policy from national to State levels positioned change to be ‘in the national interest’; that is, the nation was to work together across
geographical, sector and political divides for the benefit of the nation. This also suggested an underlying ‘co-operative federalism’ discourse in policy. Reinforced by financial policy levers, as discussed above, ‘co-operative federalism’ arguably appeared more like ‘coercive federalism’ at some points. This served to strengthen the power of the national policy elite to exert control over literacy policy text production along the policy trajectory and, ultimately, into schools.

There were clear tensions in policy text production revealed at the school level. Disjointed policy documentation was widespread across all schools studied and school literacy policy was undergoing further change at the time of the investigations in two of the three schools. There was ‘messiness’ in literacy policy text production at the school level.

Analysis revealed that each case study school was embedding national and State literacy policy, and adhering to the required accountability regimes, while also responding to the needs of their individual school community. These needs varied in each school, as revealed through examination of the local setting using the typology provided by Braun, Ball, Maguire and Hoskins (2011). For instance, one school was experiencing many changes in their student demographics. Another was found to be struggling with the apparent constant stream of policy from the broader policy context while, at the same time, producing school literacy policy for a staff that was transient and inexperienced.

Braun, Ball and Maguire (2011) use the term “policy soup” (Braun, Ball & Maguire, 2011, p. 581) to encapsulate the extent of myriad policies from different levels faced by schools during policy text production. Thus, policies in schools often become “composites … and ramshackle constructions” (Braun, Ball & Maguire, 2011, p. 581) as schools embed various policies, while also responding to and
integrating local needs, in the construction of local policy (Braun, Maguire & Ball, 2010; Gerrard & Farrell, 2013; Perryman, Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2011).

Consequently, local policy can be constantly evolving, and disjointed, as was found in this study. However, all schools investigated in the study were producing school literacy policy primarily aimed at fulfilling the predominantly neoliberal intentions of the policy elite to improve NAPLAN results, and international positioning. Thus, the neoliberal intents of the policy elite were overriding localised factors in literacy policy text production.

The study found that the combination of accountability mechanisms, financial policy levers and ‘co-operative federalism’ discourse, which arguably was ‘coercive federalism’ discourse at times, were according the Australian Federal Government with increasing control over literacy education in ECEC in schools. This was working to override the powers of the State, which, as with other States and Territories, holds constitutional powers over education in their jurisdiction. These findings reflect commentary in the literature about the emergence of a national system of schooling in Australia (Lingard, 2010, 2011; Lingard & Sellar, 2013; Lingard, Thompson & Sellar, 2016; Rizvi & Lingard, 2011; Welch, 2010). Researchers argue that, in the pursuit of enhanced international competitiveness, the Federal Government of Australia has been exercising increasing powers in education over States and Territories and, ultimately, schools, through a strengthening ‘co-operative federalism’ discourse (Lingard, 2011; Pitman, 2012), albeit with elements of ‘coercive federalism’. This is enabling the Australian Federal Government to steer policy text production in schools to meet their intentions and visions (Lingard, Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2013; Ozga, 2009; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).
The third dominant theme in policy text production identified was **literacy is important**. This draws in the theme of “literacy is foundational” identified in policy at the macro (national: Australian) level with “literacy is important” identified at the other levels of the literacy policy trajectory investigated.

Analysis of the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008) found that the national policy elite positioned literacy education as having a foundational role in ensuring the nation’s economic prosperity. The national policy elite also placed importance on literacy learning to be a focus in ECEC, recognising that attention to literacy is vital in the ECEC years (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001; Scull, Nolan & Raban, 2012; Wasik & Hindman, 2005).

The importance being placed on literacy by the national policy elite was strengthened through the instigation of national literacy testing. Accountability regimes linked with financial policy levers, as previously discussed, ensured that literacy maintained this important role in policy analysed at the meso (State: WA) level of the literacy policy trajectory investigated. The importance of literacy education flowed through to the schools as all three schools investigated had literacy ‘plans’, or policies; that is, schools’ ‘plans’ framed teaching and learning of literacy in the schools (Lingard & Ozga, 2007).

These findings of the importance being accorded to literacy ‘globally’ are in keeping with commentary in the literature. A nation needs knowledgeable citizens who can compete in the global knowledge economy (Apple, 2006, 2011; Clarke, 2012; Gibbon & Folke Henriksen, 2012; Lakes & Carter, 2011; Lupton, 2011; Olssen, 2004; Olssen, Codd & O’Neill, 2004; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Sellar & Lingard, 2013; Welch, 2010; Winter, 2012). Literacy is a major component of the knowledge citizens require to compete in this global
knowledge economy and thus literacy education contributes to making the nation economically prosperous (Bartlett, 2008; Chen & Derewianka, 2009; Diaz & Makin, 2002; Dreher, 2012; Freebody & Wyatt-Smith, 2004; Gee, 2012); that is, literacy education is central to the endeavour of enhancing a nation’s international competitiveness (Freebody & Wyatt-Smith, 2004; Sahlberg, 2011).

The importance placed on literacy education was strengthened at the national level of the literacy policy trajectory investigated in this study through detailed definitions of literacy in each of the national curriculum documents analysed. They each reflected the breadth of definitions of literacy as found in the literature (Fellowes & Oakley, 2010; Lewis-Spector, 2016; McVee, Dunsmore & Gavelek, 2005).

However, analysis found that the breadth of these definitions was not maintained in written policy along the policy trajectory from national to State and school level. Instead, literacy was increasingly narrowed in working definition in written policy along the policy trajectory, predominantly aligned with what was assessed in NAPLAN, this being the accountability regime instituted by the national policy elite. Within the ECEC years in the schools, participants’ comments revealed that the working definition, and teaching, of literacy was also being increasingly framed by the assessment regime administered in these years, namely the On-Entry Assessment Program. This meant that other aspects of literacy, detailed within national curriculum documents, and the literature, but which are not assessed by these instruments (such as digital and critical literacy), were not mentioned.

Participant comments revealed tensions about how literacy was being defined in written policy at a State and school level. To some, it was acceptable to define literacy at a State and school level according to how it was going to be assessed,
particularly in the light of financial rewards for improvements in results of those tests. For others, the concept of literacy seemed to them so huge and complex that framing its working definition in terms of testing regimes offered simplicity they believed that schools required. However, some participants expressed concern that what they considered to be important parts of literacy, such as critical literacy, that are not assessed by testing regimes would get ‘missed’ in literacy teaching.

These findings are in keeping with commentary in the literature. In a recent report of an investigation of schools in Australia, Kerkham and Comber (2016) found that NAPLAN was regulating schools’ common literacy agreements and policies and, within this, how literacy was being defined. Various researchers argue that the parts of literacy being abstracted and tested in mandatory testing regimes, such as NAPLAN, place the working definition of literacy in schools in tension with definitions in the research (Au, 2011; Berliner, 2011; Connell, 2013; Kerkham & Nixon, 2014; Paugh, Carey, King-Jackson & Russell, 2007; Urbach, 2012) as well as national curriculum documents (Lewis-Spector, 2016). Researchers posit that consequently parts of literacy not tested, such as critical and digital literacy, can be missed in teaching (Au, 2011; Berliner, 2011).

The fourth dominant theme of policy text production identified across the literacy policy trajectory was that of ECEC is important. This draws in the theme of “ECEC is foundational” identified in policy at the macro (national: Australian) level with that of “ECEC is important” identified at the other levels.

In written policy analysed across the policy trajectory investigated, ECEC was accorded with an important, and foundational, role in enabling success for students’ learning in the later school years. Such was its importance that there were specific written policies dedicated to ECEC at a national and State level of the
literacy policy trajectory investigated. School literacy policy included targets for literacy improvements specific for the ECEC years in the school. Policies emphasised education, including a focus on literacy education, in the ECEC years, over care alone.

The study found that the importance of ECEC in the national change agenda was reinforced in policy text production through embedding quality within an economic discourse reflective of neoliberal values. ‘Quality’ ECEC was thus positioned to yield improved results in key indicators. This highlighted investment in ECEC as being valuable to the nation in terms of international positioning, and economic gains. Written policy at the State level also called for ‘quality’ in ECEC programmes. Some participants at the national and State levels of the literacy policy trajectory investigated commented that continued emphasis on traditional play-based pedagogy in ECEC in schools would not provide the rigour, or presumably ‘quality’, they perceived required to yield the improved results. They argued that change in ECEC pedagogy was needed; that is, to include more emphasis on explicit teaching of content. There was also advocacy through policy at a State level for the ECEC years to be included in whole school planning for improvements, with increasing emphasis on provision of education over care in the ECEC years in schools. At a school level, tensions were revealed with these intentions of the policy elite. Participants in schools commented that proposed changes in pedagogy to include more explicit literacy teaching were not in tune with the traditional pedagogy and curriculum to which many ECEC teachers subscribed. Throughout the literacy policy trajectory investigated, the voices of parents and children were missing in written policy on the issue of ‘quality’ ECEC.
These findings are in keeping with commentary in the literature. There is much literature to support the stance that quality ECEC programmes are important for establishing solid foundation of skills and knowledge in children for later learning (Bennett, 2013; Lowenstein, 2011; Moss, 2013; Siraj-Blatchford & Woodhead, 2009; Whitebread & Coltman, 2008; Wood, 2008). However, researchers comment that neoliberal based educational agendas are increasingly framing ECEC in predominantly economic discourses, with quality in ECEC being equated with excellence in standards and key indicators (Fenech, 2011; Gibson, McArdle & Hatcher, 2015; Logan, Press & Sumson, 2012; Moss, 2013; Moss, Dahlberg & Pence, 2013), so positioning ECEC, in an economic sense, as contributing to a country’s competitiveness in the global knowledge economy (Krejsler, 2012).

Various researchers argue that ‘quality’ in relation to the ECEC years should be expanded beyond economic terms (Ceglowski & Bacigalupa, 2002; Gibson, 2016; Logan, Press & Sumson, 2012; Logan & Sumson, 2010; Moss, 2014; Moss, Dahlberg & Pence, 2013; Pascal, 1993; Woodhead, 1998). For instance, Logan, Press and Sumson (2012) argue for quality to be positioned in a multidimensional frame that includes contextual and local factors along with standards and regulatory measures. Moss, Dahlberg and Pence (2013), as well as Gibson (2016), stress that judgements about quality in ECEC need to encompass the perspectives of all stakeholders, including that of parents and children.

To synthesise the nature of policy text production along the entire literacy policy trajectory investigated, three propositions were developed and are presented below.
POLICY TEXT PRODUCTION

Proposition 3:

The Australian Federal Government is seeking to exert greater control over States and Territories in literacy education in the ECEC years in schools through policy text production underpinned by a combination of co-operative and coercive federalism, strengthened through accountability regimes and financial policy levers.

Proposition 4:

The combination of Australian Federal, and State, policy steerage serves to override localised factors to ensure that schools meet the neoliberal intents of the policy elite in literacy policy production relevant to the ECEC years.

Proposition 5:

As quality in ECEC becomes increasingly reconfigured in economic terms, this may further constrain the ability of stakeholders, such as parents and children, to contribute to determinations of quality in relation to literacy education in ECEC.
Research Question Three: The Context of Policy Practices (Enactment)

How is school literacy policy being enacted by ECEC teachers in public schools in the State of WA?

There were two substantial themes of policy practices (enactment) identified across all three case studies in the literacy policy trajectory investigated: data-driven literacy teaching practices and accountability. A third theme of leadership challenges was not as prominent, as it was identified in two of the three case studies. Each of these is discussed separately below with links made to the literature. However, it must be emphasised that there was significant interaction and overlap between the themes.

The first theme identified in the context of policy practices (enactment) across the three case studies was data-driven literacy teaching practices. In all three schools investigated, literacy teaching in the ECEC years was being shaped by results in tests administered in those, and later, years. Teachers were focused on achievement of targets related to test results, these tests mainly being NAPLAN and the On-Entry Assessment Program. Accordingly, teachers were predominantly using the data from these literacy tests to inform literacy teaching in the ECEC years, with teacher judgement being de-emphasised.

All schools investigated included targets in their written school literacy policies in relation to literacy performances in the On-Entry Assessment Program. Participants in all schools also commented on how their literacy teaching was being shaped by the results of this test to ensure good performances. For instance, some Kindergarten teachers in the study reported how the data was informing their literacy
teaching to ensure improved results when these Kindergarten children engaged in the On-Entry Assessment Program in the following year.

Furthermore, results in the On-Entry Assessment Program were used to monitor students’ progress towards good results when these students engaged in NAPLAN in later years. Some participants revealed how children who did not perform well in the On-Entry Assessment Program were targeted with ‘intervention’ and received adapted curricula to ensure ‘good’ results when they engaged with NAPLAN in later years. It thus appeared that students in ECEC in schools were being ‘sorted’ according to the likelihood of success in later testing. These practices are identified in the literature as ‘educational triage’ (Gillborn & Youdell, 2000). Similar practices were also identified by Roberts-Holmes and Bradbury (2016a, 2016b) in some early childhood contexts in schools in England.

In this study, literacy teaching in the ECEC years in the schools was also informed from results of the analysis of the school’s NAPLAN data, in which all teachers engaged across the case study sites. Participants explained that through analysis of the school’s NAPLAN results, underlying knowledge and skills required for success in future NAPLAN testing was identified for future teaching. Through what many participants in the schools termed as ‘backward mapping’, this also shaped literacy teaching in the ECEC years. There was minimal mention of teacher judgements being used in these processes. Participants’ comments revealed that staff believed that teaching these ‘underlying’ skills to what is assessed in NAPLAN in the ECEC years, will prevent ECEC students from ‘falling behind’ (Bodrova, 2008). Thus, the study found that the push to achieve ‘good’ NAPLAN results was predominantly framing the working definition of literacy, and subsequently literacy teaching, with other aspects not assessed by NAPLAN not mentioned by
participants. Kerkham and Comber (2016) reported similar findings in their study of schools in another State of Australia, namely South Australia.

These findings of data-driven literacy teaching reflect commentary in the literature on how ‘policy as numbers’ (Lingard, 2011; Lingard, Creagh & Vass, 2012; Lingard, Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2013; Ozga, 2009; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010), which focuses on data, makes ‘evaluation’ a dominant value in schools across the curriculum (Lingard, Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2013; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Schools thus focus upon testing performances and this means that teachers teach in ways to deliver the desired results in the ECEC, and later, years (Ball, Maguire, Braun, Perryman & Hoskins, 2012). A predominant focus on data-driven teaching is emphasising an “economy of numbers” (Hardy, 2015, p. 359) in schools over an “economy of learning” (Hardy, 2015, p. 359).

Some participants in this study accepted data-driven literacy teaching practices in ECEC as necessary, particularly when improved NAPLAN results were embedded with financial rewards and/or the school’s reputation. However, various participants also expressed concern. They believed that these data-driven literacy teaching practices were increasing pressure for inclusion of more explicit teaching of literacy content in the ECEC years, and, at times, a perceived ‘push-down’ of formal curriculum into ECEC in schools, in deference to play-based pedagogy. These concerns mirrored those reported in the literature (Bennett, 2013; Cochran, 2011; Mills, 2008; Moss, 2013; Polesel, Rice & Dulfer, 2014).

The second theme identified across the three case studies in the context of policy practices (enactment) was accountability. In all three schools studied, there were accountability mechanisms placed on teachers in the ECEC years for achieving improved outcomes through students’ performances in the On-Entry Assessment
Program and, ultimately, NAPLAN. In this way, pressures to meet accountability requirements were clearly linked with the data-driven teaching practices that were found in each school, as discussed above.

Furthermore, the study identified another form of accountability being placed on teachers, and this was through performance management processes. In one school, the Principal was the line manager for teachers in ECEC. In the other two schools, all teachers, including those in ECEC, were required to demonstrate how they were engaging in school literacy policy processes and contributing towards achieving improved results in NAPLAN. Performance management was being used by the leadership in each school as a mechanism of control to ensure compliance by ECEC teachers in school literacy policy processes.

The use of performance management to monitor teachers and ensure compliance in policy processes is commented upon in the literature (Ball, 2003; Ball & Olmedo, 2013). Furthermore, Ball and his colleagues argue that this is part of a performance, or audit, culture in schools which also reflects an emerging global meta-narrative of “schooling as performances” (Ball, Maguire, Braun, Perryman & Hoskins, 2012, p. 515).

The third theme identified in the context of policy practices (enactment) across two of the three schools investigated was leadership challenges. Across the three schools, there was a constancy of new policy expectations from the national and State policy elite requiring schools to reconfigure school based policies accordingly. Change seemed a constant.

In one school, change was being managed calmly. Analysis of this school’s setting, using the typology provided by Braun, Ball, Maguire and Hoskins (2011), found that this was a well established school with experienced staff. The leadership
was relatively new to the school, but they were highly regarded by staff. It seemed that the leadership of this school was making sense of policy (Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002) in ways that was allowing them to reinterprète, recontextualise (Braun, Maguire & Ball, 2010) and modify (Levinson, Sutton & Winstead, 2009) policy from the policy elite while also meeting the needs of their community.

However, in the other two schools, feelings of uncertainty, and almost panic, prevailed as these schools worked to meet the demands from constantly incoming policies with the demands of meeting the needs of their school community. Leaders in both of these schools were experiencing many difficulties in leadership and participants conveyed feelings of frustration with constant change.

Analysis of each school’s setting, using the typology provided by Braun, Ball, Maguire and Hoskins (2011), revealed contributing underlying factors in each of these schools. One school was located in a remote area and staffed by transient and inexperienced teachers. This school had recently been in receipt of Australian Federal Government financial assistance to achieve improved results in NAPLAN, with this increasing the pressures for enhanced competitiveness. Leaders in this school appeared overwhelmed by the task of leading school literacy policy processes within this setting. Leaders in another school believed there was neither the leadership nor expertise in the school adequate enough to lead literacy policy processes, even though this was a school of experienced staff. This was a relatively new school that was growing rapidly in student population. Participants here expressed struggles as they worked to maintain a good reputation in the market in the context of changing student demographics.

In both schools, leaders frequently sourced the advice of external consultants to ensure compliance with mandatory policy, and achieve improvements. However,
these practices seemed to create further uncertainty. The majority of participants from one school commented that ideas gleaned from externally-sourced consultants appeared to contradict each other. Staff in both schools declared a lack of time to integrate new ideas learnt into school literacy policy. Engagement by ECEC teachers themselves in professional learning in both schools produced further tensions. Participants’ comments revealed that, at times, ideas gleaned seemed to contradict underlying philosophical and pedagogical stances espoused through each school’s literacy policy. Results in NAPLAN in these schools were apparently not improving.

Ball and Olmedo (2013) argue that pressures for compliance, and performativity, can produce uncertainty in staff, as was found in this study in these two schools. Furthermore, Hardy (2015) in a report of his ongoing work with teachers in the Australian educational policy environment in Queensland also found that teachers and leaders are faced with myriad of policies, a “policy soup” (Braun, Ball & Maguire, 2011, p. 581), with this adding to an environment of uncertainty and confusion. Staff in the two schools discussed above did not appear to have the time to reinterpret, recontextualise (Braun, Maguire & Ball, 2010) and modify (Levinson, Sutton & Winstead, 2009) policy from the policy elite according to their needs. Leaders in both of these schools attempted to exert control through data driven literacy teaching practices and by accountability regimes, as previously discussed. Comments from some leaders and teachers revealed that they believed these combined to offer certainty, so allowing progress, or lack thereof, in their students to be ‘seen’.

The study found that differences in leadership in the context of policy practices (enactment) between the schools could be partly attributed to factors within each school’s setting described using a typology provided by Braun, Ball, Maguire
Two propositions were developed to synthesise key findings from the analysis of the context of policy practices (enactment) in the schools investigated and these are presented below.

**POLICY PRACTICES (ENACTMENT)**

**Proposition 6:**

Data-driven literacy teaching, together with accountability mechanisms, is serving to sway ECEC teachers in schools to focus on teaching literacy in ways that will contribute to the school’s improved results in testing regimes conducted in the ECEC and later years, thereby narrowing the working definition of literacy.

**Proposition 7:**

Although localised factors explain some differences in enactment of school literacy policy by ECEC teachers between schools, the pressures to comply with the neoliberal intentions of the policy elite remain paramount in policy enactment.
Research Question Four: The Context of Longer Term Policy Outcomes

What are the longer term outcomes of the enactment of school literacy policy?

There were three dominant themes of longer term policy outcomes identified across all three case studies in the literacy policy trajectory investigated: changes in teachers’ literacy work, literacy is narrowed and ECEC becomes part of the school. Each of these themes is discussed below with references made to the literature.

The first theme identified in the context of longer term policy outcomes was changes in teachers’ literacy work. The sub-themes of “deskilled and disempowered”, “reskilled” and “disempowered” in each of the three schools describes these changes and encapsulates the effects of these changes on teachers’ sense of professionalism in literacy teaching.

ECEC teachers investigated in the three schools increasingly were finding themselves as analysts and users of data as they became predominantly focused on their students achieving ‘good’ results in literacy assessments. This was reducing the emphasis on the use of teacher judgement in informing literacy assessments, and teaching. Across the case study sites, the focus on data seemed reasonable to many participants, as results were often underpinned by financial rewards, accountability pressures and/or were feeding parent choice discourses.

In one school, teachers’ engagement with data seemed positive. Participants described how they were being reskilled in their literacy teaching as they engaged with the data. However, in the remaining two schools, data-driven literacy teaching was found to be contributing to teachers being deskilled and disempowered. Results
in tests such as NAPLAN were not improving and many participants expressed feelings of frustration. Some participants expressed their belief that time spent managing and using data meant less time for engaging in what they considered to be other important aspects of the job. Some of the ECEC teachers in these two schools expressed uncertainty about their literacy teaching in an environment focused on producing results that, in turn, were not improving. This conveyed the impression that their belief in themselves as ECEC literacy teachers had been eroded. In all schools investigated, teachers’ sense of professionalism in literacy teaching in ECEC was changing.

These findings about changes in teachers’ sense of professionalism stemming from enactment of policy are in keeping with commentary in the literature. Researchers argue that ‘policy as numbers’ (Lingard, 2011; Lingard, Creagh & Vass, 2012; Lingard, Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2013; Ozga, 2009; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) means teachers are now working with significant amounts of data (Lingard, Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2013; Ozga, 2009). This can change teacher’s work, and sense of professionalism (Ball, 2003; Ball, Maguire, Braun, Perryman & Hoskins, 2012; Ball & Olmedo, 2013; Bradbury, 2012; Brennan, Zipin & Sellar, 2016; Brown & Pickard, 2014; Kerkham & Comber, 2016; Thompson & Cook, 2014), to an emphasis on “technical professionalism” (Ball et al., 2012, p. 523); that is, emphasising the use of scientific, ‘technical’ data over teacher judgements to measure student progress.

The second theme identified in the context of longer term policy outcomes was literacy is narrowed. In all three schools, school literacy policy documents predominantly framed literacy within a traditional definition (Anstey & Bull, 1996). Targets were mostly in relation to achievements in reading and writing and strategies detailed in written policy mainly provided direction on teaching ‘constrained’ skills
of literacy (Paris, 2005), such as alphabet knowledge and letter-sound correspondences, in contributing to students’ reading and writing development. Participants also predominantly talked about the use of strategies, programmes and frameworks in which to teach these ‘constrained’ skills.

Definitions of literacy within the two national curriculum policy documents analysed, namely *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Version 3.0* (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2011b) and *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR] for the Council of Australian Governments [COAG], 2009), were broad and encompassed many of the language modes within literacy. Analysis found that, in comparison to definitions in these national curriculum documents, many aspects of literacy were effectively missing in school literacy policy across the case study sites. There was minimal mention in the school documents or by participants in schools of ‘unconstrained skills’ (Paris, 2005), such as vocabulary, or consideration of other aspects of literacy from the literature to which national curriculum document definitions alluded, such as critical literacy, digital literacy or multimodal literacy (Fellowes & Oakley, 2010; Lewis-Spector, 2016; Mills, 2008; Parr & Campbell, 2012; Urbach, 2012; Walsh, 2010, 2011; Yelland, 2011). There was also minimal mention of the role of oral language, this being encapsulated in the modes of speaking and listening in national curriculum documents. Researchers identify oral language as important in the development of literacy in ECEC (Dickinson & McCabe, 2001; McCordle, Cooper, Houle, Karp & Paul-Brown, 2001; Peterson, McIntyre & Forsyth, 2016). The definition of literacy in the ECEC years in the schools investigated was thus found to be, not only in tension with national
curriculum policy documents but, also in tension with definitions of literacy in the literature.

The content of the literacy curriculum in the ECEC years in the three schools investigated was predominantly being shaped by what was assessed in mandated literacy tests, focused on enhancing the school’s competitive positioning. Across the case study sites, participants’ reports of literacy teaching in the ECEC years revealed that many teachers were teaching the skills assessed in the On-Entry Assessment Program, such as sound knowledge, and/or what was being assessed in NAPLAN.

These findings reflect commentary in the literature. Various researchers reported that pressures to perform in ‘high-stakes’ literacy testing narrowed the content of what was taught in literacy to the skills being assessed in the tests (Au, 2011; Berliner, 2011; Cormack & Comber, 2013; Kerkham & Comber, 2016; Klenowski & Wyatt-Smith, 2012; Kostogriz & Doecke, 2013; Peterson, McIntyre & Forsyth, 2016; Polesel, Rice & Dulfer, 2014; Thomas, Warren & deVries, 2011). Peterson, McIntyre and Forsyth (2016) suggest that teachers engage in professional learning to ensure the breadth of literacy remains in the literacy curriculum, particularly in regards to the role of oral language for the literacy learner in ECEC.

Narrowing literacy to the skills assessed in particular literacy assessments, as was found in this study, may restrict children’s access to, and future learning of, foundational skills for life in twenty-first Australian society. For instance, documents and participants at the school level in the study made minimal mention of the literacy practices being brought to the school context by the students themselves, developed in out-of-school social contexts. Literacies developed from engagement with other cultures, media and technology were also missing from discussions of literacy teaching in ECEC in these schools.
Various researchers argue that teachers need to recognise the different cultural, social and language backgrounds of students, and subsequent differences between their literacy practices (Luke & Freebody, 1999; New London Group, 1996; Purcell-Gates, Melzi, Najafi & Orellana, 2011; Urbach, 2012). Researchers claim that lack of recognition of these differences can limit students’ access to the literacies needed for success in school, and later learning (Bartlett, 2008; Dyson, 1993, 2003; Gee, 1989, 2012; Heath, 1983; Hill, Comber, Louden, Rivilland & Reid, 1998a, 1998b; Janks, 2010; Makin, Hayden & Diaz, 2000; New London Group, 1996; Urbach, 2012), with this adversely impacting equity (Gee, 2012; Janks, 2010; Luke & Freebody, 1999; Street, 1995, 1997, 2005). Furthermore, by teaching literacy with a focus on testable skills, framed by a traditional definition of literacy, researchers assert that students will not be learning literacies needed for twenty-first century living (Au, 2011; Berliner, 2011; Kerkham & Comber, 2016), such as critical and multimodal literacy.

The third theme identified in the context of longer term policy outcomes was **ECEC becomes part of the school.** Through the enactment of school literacy policy by ECEC teachers, there was increasing inclusion of the ECEC years in all three schools investigated, including the non-compulsory years. For instance, ECEC teachers were actively included in whole school planning for improvement through participation in whole school analysis of NAPLAN results.

However, the perception was that inclusion was causing increasing pressures for pedagogical and curriculum change in ECEC in the schools investigated. Participant comments revealed increasing pressures to explicitly teach literacy content in the ECEC years in preparing students for success in testing regimes, such as On-Entry Assessment Program and NAPLAN. Many participants perceived that
this increased emphasis on academic content was de-emphasising traditional play-based pedagogy, to which most of the ECEC teachers subscribed. A few participants made comments that indicated they believed these pedagogical and curriculum changes in literacy were contributing to making students in the non-compulsory years of ECEC in schools ‘ready’ for school; that is, the increasingly academic curricula in literacy seemed targeted towards literacy learning in the next stage of schooling.

Many ECEC teachers reported they were struggling to reconcile these requirements of the school literacy policy with the ECEC philosophy and pedagogy to which they subscribed. Teachers across the schools investigated were engaging in professional learning activities, including visits to other schools and union provided workshops, to assist them in achieving what they termed a ‘balance’. For some ECEC teachers, this professional learning created confusion and, at times, stress. For other ECEC teachers, it allowed them to reflect and be informed, so feeling more confident in articulating their beliefs.

Researchers contend that the drive to ‘ready’ children for testing, and the next stage of schooling, has the potential to emphasise academic content in ECEC programmes (Barblett, Knaus & Barratt-Pugh, 2016; Bradbury, 2013; Brown, 2013; Brown & Pickard, 2014; Moss, 2013; Roberts-Holmes, 2015; Roberts-Holmes & Bradbury, 2016a, 2016b). For instance, in a recent study based in WA, the same State as this study, Barblett, Knaus and Barratt-Pugh (2016) found that, in response to pressures for good performances in ‘high-stakes’ testing, namely NAPLAN, there was a ‘pushdown’ of academic content into the ECEC years in schools as teachers explicitly taught content perceived as required for success in NAPLAN testing. The researchers assert that this is leading to a perceived erosion of traditional play-based
pedagogy. Roberts-Holmes (2015) and Roberts-Holmes and Bradbury (2016a, 2016b) found that the pressures from mandated testing in England in Reception, when children turned five, was resulting in increasing academic curricula, as teaching became targeted towards students’ success in testing in that year and for learning in the next stage of schooling. They contend that this is effecting change from traditional play-based pedagogy to more emphasis on formal learning pedagogy and curricula. Subsequently, these researchers assert that students are being ‘readied for school’.

The challenges being faced by the ECEC teachers in this study in resolving tensions in such a policy environment are mirrored in reports in the literature. Various researchers have found that teachers are struggling to reconcile the demands and changes stemming from enactment of mandated policy with their personal philosophies about ECEC (Barblett, Knaus & Barratt-Pugh, 2016; Bradbury, 2012, 2013, 2014; Fenech & Sumsion, 2007; Grant, Danby, Thorpe & Theobold, 2016; Moss, 2013; Osgood, 2006; Pyle, Prioletta & Poliszczuk, 2017; Soler & Miller, 2003). Other commentary in the literature offers further explanations.

Many researchers argue that learning in ECEC is best supported through a play-based pedagogy (Cochran, 2011; Edwards, 2017; Fleer, 2011; Fleer, Anning & Cullen, 2004; Lee, 2006; Malaguzzi & Gandini, 1993; McInnes, Howard, Miles & Crowley, 2011; McLachlan, Fleer & Edwards, 2010; Moss, 2013; Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2008; Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004; Siraj-Blatchford & Woodhead, 2009; Whitebread & Coltman, 2008; Wood, 2008) that also includes times for explicit and intentional teaching (Edwards, 2017; Epstein, 2007; Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2008; Sylva et al., 2007; Thomas, Warren & deVries, 2011).
Furthermore, various researchers contend that play-based pedagogy is powerful for literacy learning in ECEC (Hay & Fielding-Barnsley, 2012; Massey, 2013; Meacham, Vukelich, Han & Buell, 2014; Pellegrini & Galda, 1993; Pyle, Prioletta & Poliszczuk, 2017; Roskos & Christie, 2001; Roskos & Neuman, 1993; Van Oers & Duijkers, 2012). Erosion of play-based pedagogy may thus have an adverse impact upon young children’s literacy learning. However, Edwards (2017) posits that play and teaching do not have to be placed as pedagogical ‘opposites’ in education. Rather, “play-types” (Edwards, 2017, p. 8), that include open-ended play and purposeful play with intentional teaching, can be incorporated flexibly to enable teachers to achieve ‘balance’ in ECEC pedagogy.

Researchers also stress that curriculum in ECEC needs to be broad and inclusive of all the domains of a child’s development (Epstein, 2007; Fleer, 2011; Lee, 2006; Moss, 2013; Rinaldi, 2004; Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004; Siraj-Blatchford & Woodhead, 2009; Whitebread & Coltman, 2008; Wood, 2008), rather than focused upon academic learning. Learning within a child’s social-emotional domain can positively impact upon learning in academic areas (Denham & Brown, 2010; Nix, Bierman, Domitrovich & Gill, 2013). Some researchers and theorists argue that emphasising academic learning during ECEC does not necessarily guarantee future academic success (Bodrova, 2008) and may adversely impact upon children’s self esteem and confidence in learning (Whitebread & Coleman, 2008). Furthermore, Roberts-Holmes and Bradbury (2016b) assert that the discourses of school readiness in ECEC, with its emphasis on academic learning, can undermine foundations for children’s personal development, so adversely impacting upon other learning. Brown (2013) argues that school readiness should be broader than academic learning and include other factors, such as family support. This would
recognise aspects within children’s social-emotional domain and may contribute to maintaining the breadth of ECEC curriculum.

Some commentary in the literature indicates that the focus on testing in ECEC in schools may have long term implications for equity and quality in ECEC. Bradbury (2013) argues that some children, who may come from backgrounds that do not include experiences which adequately prepare them for testing, are being disadvantaged by the testing itself, as well as teaching targeted towards the testing. Access to schooling for these children is thus restricted, so creating a form of social exclusion (Thrupp & Tomlinson, 2005). Furthermore, Bradbury (2013) claims that, in the long term, this focus on testing may effect change in teachers’ view of the learner in ECEC, as the child becomes reconceptualised as someone who must be prepared for testing. Sims and Waniganayake (2015) assert that young children are thus not being valued for who they are but rather for who they will become.

Additionally, quality in such an environment focused on test results remains dominantly equated with excellence against outcomes (Gibson, 2016; Moss, Dahlberg & Pence, 2013; Phillips, Mekos, Scarr, McCartney & Abbott-Shim, 2000; Sims & Waniganayake, 2015). Researchers argue that judgements about quality in ECEC should be an ongoing (Gibson, 2016) and democratic process (Moss, Dahlberg & Pence, 2013) that includes perspectives of all stakeholders (Ceglowski & Bacigalupa, 2002; Logan & Sumison 2010; Pascal, 1993; Woodhead, 1998). Trying to balance these broader views of quality with what the service ‘measures’ as quality can be a source of additional tensions for ECEC teachers (Logan & Sumson, 2010).

Some researchers implore ECEC teachers to exercise agency and engage in critical thinking to reflect on perceived changes to ECEC curriculum and pedagogy
stemming from enactment of educational policies focused upon testing (Barblett, Knaus & Barratt-Pugh, 2016; Fenech & Sumsion, 2007). Brown and his colleagues (Brown & Weber, 2016; Brown, Weber & Yoon, 2015) recently found that targeted professional learning can assist ECEC teachers in schools to engage in such critical thinking and adapt their work in ways that meet their professional responsibilities as ECEC teachers, as well as policy requirements. In this way, testing can be accorded with more educative purposes than mere learning to achieve in a test (Hardy, 2016; Thompson, Sellar & Lingard, 2016).

Three propositions were developed to synthesise the key findings from the analysis of the context of longer term policy outcomes in the schools investigated and these are presented below.
LONGER TERM OUTCOMES

Proposition 8:

The enactment of school literacy policy by ECEC teachers produces ‘data-centred’ practice which, in the long term, may create change in ECEC teachers’ sense of professionalism in literacy teaching.

Proposition 9:

The enactment of school literacy policy by ECEC teachers is narrowing literacy teaching to what can be readily assessed and, in the long term, this may limit students’ access to broader aspects of literacy required for later success in schooling and twenty-first century living.

Proposition 10:

From the enactment of school literacy policy by ECEC teachers, students are receiving an increasingly academic curriculum through a pedagogy that has less emphasis on play which, in the long term, may serve to impact equity in and quality of ECEC in schools.
Concluding Discussion

This chapter has presented the meta-analysis along the policy trajectory of the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on ECEC teachers. Themes and sub-themes identified through the meta-analysis were discussed in relation to the literature within each policy context, namely influences, text production, practices (enactment) and longer term outcomes. In total, ten propositions were developed to provide ‘food for thought’ in other jurisdictions.

In this study, dominant neoliberal influences along the policy trajectory investigated were found to be underpinning an intense push for improved educational outcomes to enhance Australia’s international positioning in the global knowledge economy. Education was thus accorded an important role in the nation’s economic agenda and quality and equity were both being used as key goals within persuasive rationales. Subsequently, schools were becoming increasingly marketised as they worked to produce the citizens needed to meet these neoliberal intents.

Commanding policy text production processes were strengthened along the literacy policy trajectory through predominantly test-focused accountability regimes, underpinned by financial policy levers. These contributed to reinforcing the underlying co-operative federalism discourse, which arguably also became coercive at times, as the national policy elite exerted power in taking Australia towards a national system of schooling, to achieve their aim of enhanced international competitiveness. Improvements in both literacy and ECEC became positioned as foundational to these goals. The ‘promise’ of rewards, such as heightened reputation and more funding, meant that the neoliberal demands of the policy elite remained prominent in schools in policy text production.
In the context of policy practices (enactment), literacy teaching in the ECEC years in schools became predominantly data-driven and narrowed to a focus on those skills which were tested, this de-emphasising teacher judgement in informing literacy teaching. Although local needs had some impact upon school literacy policy processes, the neoliberal intentions of the policy elite for enhanced international positioning overrode localised factors, so reinforcing the power of the policy elite to ‘steer at a distance’ literacy teaching in ECEC in schools.

In the context of longer term policy outcomes, this ‘data-centred’ practice was effecting change in the work of ECEC teachers in literacy teaching, and their sense of professionalism. The narrowing of literacy to what can be assessed may have possible long term impacts on children’s equity and quality of literacy learning. Data-centred practices were also increasing pressures to formally teach literacy content in ECEC in schools to ‘ready’ children for success in tests in ECEC and later years. Play-based pedagogy was subsequently being de-emphasised and, in the long term, this may impact upon the equity in, and quality of, ECEC in schools.

The next chapter outlines relevant policy evolution since data collection, future directions and implications for further research in concluding this thesis.
Chapter Twelve

Ongoing Policy Evolution and Future Directions

Introduction

This study investigated the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on early childhood education and care (ECEC) teachers. The previous chapter presented the results of the meta-analysis along the literacy policy trajectory investigated. This chapter moves the focus beyond the bounds of this thesis to focus on future directions.

The chapter is in three parts. The first part traces key national and State educational policy evolution, relevant to school literacy policy in the ECEC years, since the completion of data collection, in 2012, to thesis submission, in mid 2017. This is followed by a section on future directions and then implications for further research.

The study was located within selected public schools in the State of Western Australia (WA). It is important to emphasise that there is no intention to generalise the study’s findings from this specific context to other contexts in Australia and internationally. However, some of the findings and implications identified may provide ‘food for thought’ and reflection in other jurisdictions.
Part One: Educational Policy Evolution in Australia: 2013 – 2017

Data collection concluded in late 2012. In recognition of the dynamic and evolving nature of policy, this section traces relevant key policy activity in national (Australian) and State (WA) educational policy from 2013 to approximately the first half of 2017, when this thesis was submitted. This provides the broad milieu in which schools in WA continued to produce and enact school literacy policy. It also sets the context for future policy development and implications for further research.

National (Australian) Educational Policy 2013-2017

As data collection concluded in 2012, the recommendations of the Review of funding for schooling: Final report (Gonski, 2011) were being deliberated upon by the Australian Federal Government. One of the key recommendations of this report was for a review to be undertaken of government funding provided to schools across the nation. This was to ensure future funding arrangements would enable the achievement of quality and equity for all students, within the context of excellent outcomes, so continuing to pursue the goal of enhanced international competitiveness. The National Plan for School Improvement (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013) that eventuated from these deliberations detailed a raft of proposed funding agreements between the Australian Federal Government and State and Territory Governments in support of achieving these aims. These arrangements represented the continued use of financial policy levers by the national policy elite over the States and Territories, and schools. These served to reinforce compliance by States and Territories, and schools, with the persistent neoliberal intentions of the national policy elite, as non-compliance meant possible loss of funding. The National Plan for School Improvement (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013) also
symbolised persistence in the underlying push from the national policy elite for a national system of schooling in Australia. Quality and equity remained as key goals in policy embedded within the ongoing pursuit for improved outcomes to enhance Australia’s international competitiveness.

**Literacy is important.** At the national level of educational policy, literacy maintained its important role in contributing to enhanced international competitiveness, mainly through national curriculum policy. Since 2012, the national curriculum in Australia had numerous version changes. At the time of thesis submission in mid 2017, *Australian Curriculum: Version 8.3* (Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2017b) was the current version available online. Its overarching aim remained the same as what was in *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Version 3.0* (ACARA, 2011b); that is, to equip students with the necessary knowledge required to compete in the globalised world. In this way, the national curriculum continued to embed, and convey, the national policy elite’s neoliberal intentions of achieving enhanced international competitiveness.

The central role of literacy education in this pursuit was further reinforced within the *Australian Curriculum: English Version 8.3* (ACARA, 2017a). This curriculum stressed the importance of teaching literacy in the early years of schooling, with this seen as establishing solid foundations for students’ later literacy learning.

The National Assessment Program-Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and the *MySchool* website ([https://www.myschool.edu.au/](https://www.myschool.edu.au/)) maintained their status as ‘high stakes’ accountability on Australian schools for improvements in literacy (and numeracy). ACARA, an organisation funded by the Australian Federal Government, still managed these accountability mechanisms at the time of thesis submission, in
mid 2017, and continued to publish annual summary reports of the NAPLAN results of individual States and Territories. The MySchool website continued to publish online the results of individual schools. Each year, media reports at the time of publication of the NAPLAN results highlighted the comparative ‘highs and lows’ of the performances of various jurisdictions and sectors. Furthermore, the Australian Federal Government continued to link results in NAPLAN with financial rewards for States, Territories, and schools. For instance, the Improving Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership programme, developed in the context of the National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy (Council for Australian Governments (COAG), 2008b), maintained funding to States and Territories for the implementation of particular literacy teaching strategies to improve results in NAPLAN in schools identified as not doing well.

In 2017, NAPLAN was to be administered online in five of the States and Territories, with others to follow in the years to come (ACARA, 2017c). These online NAPLAN tests are adaptive; that is, the next question students receive depends on their success in the previous ones. Potentially, each student receives a different test to others. Online NAPLAN testing may enable a shorter timeframe in which results are collated and schools can use results to inform teaching more quickly than paper-based testing allows.

However, the future of online NAPLAN testing remained unclear at the time of thesis submission, in mid 2017. On April 19 2017, only weeks before NAPLAN testing was to proceed in Australia, the five States and Territories, including WA, withdrew their participation in the online administrations (Cook & Jacks, 2017, April 19). Cook and Jacks (2017, April 19) reported that all jurisdictions were concerned about possible technical glitches, such as poor internet connections.
ECEC is important. The importance of ECEC in the pursuit of improved outcomes to enhance international competitiveness remained a feature in national educational policy. For instance, the national policy elite continued to provide funding for ‘Universal Access’ across Australia. This funding contributes towards States and Territories provision of 15 hours per week of play-based education, lead by a qualified teacher, for all children in the year before formal schooling, generally when children are approximately four years of age. The most recent of these at the time of thesis submission, in mid 2017, was the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education - 2016 and 2017 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016b).

In support of processes to ensure ‘quality’ in ECEC, the federally funded Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority managed continued implementation of the National Quality Framework, and within this, the National Quality Standards, around Australia (Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority, 2017). The National Quality Standards is a system of accreditation against seven standards for all ECEC facilities across Australia. The standards are in relation to areas that include curriculum, leadership, physical setting and family partnerships. The National Quality Standards continued to frame the assessment of quality in ECEC in Australia predominantly against standards. However, with the inclusion of areas such as family partnerships, and use of professional judgements in the assessment processes against the standards, there was scope to broaden the notion of ‘quality’ to include voices of other stakeholders such as parents, children and professionals.

The Australian Early Developmental Index (AEDI) underwent a name change in 2014 and became the Australian Early Developmental Census (AEDC). In
all other aspects the assessment tool was unchanged. The AEDC continued to provide a snapshot of children’s development every three years as assessed in their first year of compulsory schooling across Australia. The AEDC of 2015 found that 1 in 5 Australian children and 2 in 5 Indigenous Australian children were ‘developmentally vulnerable’, or weak, in the areas of social competence, physical health and overall well-being when they start school (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a). It seemed that outcomes in ECEC in Australia were not improving. Early Childhood Australia, the national professional association for ECEC educators, used these results to urge the national policy elite to continue to support the provision of quality ECEC around Australia through policy, and ongoing funding (Smith, 2016, August 9).

**Competitiveness in 2017.** Late in 2016, reports revealed that NAPLAN results around Australia appeared to have ‘stagnated’ in literacy, namely reading and writing (Rice, 2016, December 13). Furthermore, results from the 2015 Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), also published in late 2016, showed that Australia had dropped in international ranking in reading to 12th (Thomson, De Bortoli & Underwood, 2017). It seemed that Australia was not achieving its goal of international competitiveness.

The Federal Education Minister, Simon Birmingham, publicly labelled these results as unacceptable and the blame was laid on poorly targeted funding and poor quality teaching (Staff writers, News Corp Australia Network, 2016, August 3). Early Childhood Australia drew upon results from AEDC 2015 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a) to explain the lack of improvements in NAPLAN results. They argued that, as many Australian children were apparently ‘developmentally
vulnerable’ when they started school, this made it difficult for them to ‘catch up’, particularly when these children were presented with an academically oriented curricula focused on achieving test results (Smith, 2016, August 9). In response to the claims about poor quality teaching, Gabrielle Stroud, a freelance commentator and an ex-teacher, contended that the results were a direct result of an erosion of trust in teacher judgement in deference to trust in the data (Stroud, 2017, February 2). She argued that increasing accountability on teachers, and the resultant focus on teaching to produce data, was resulting in more paperwork for teachers and leaving less time for teaching. Stroud (2017, February 2) asserted that these, rather than ‘poor quality teaching’, were the main contributing factors to the persistent poor results.

A new era of national testing. The reaction of the national policy elite to the perceived lack of progress included plans for a new national testing regime, this further perpetuating neoliberal values in educational policy. In January 2017, the Federal Education Minister, Simon Birmingham, announced plans to instigate a mandated national testing regime in literacy in the ECEC years of schooling, namely ‘national phonics testing’ (Birmingham, 2017, January 29). This testing proposes to assess the letter-sound correspondence knowledge, using a series of real words and non-words, of Year One students around Australia. This new national testing regime positioned knowledge about letter-sound correspondences as primary foundations for later literacy learning. It was argued that any ‘deficits’ identified early through this testing would enable appropriate intervention, and thus, improved results. This testing regime represented persistence in literacy being narrowed in working definition to ‘constrained’ skills (Paris, 2005) in Australian educational policy in the
continued push for improved outcomes. A Federal advisory panel was established to further investigate the potential of this testing regime.

The reaction to the proposed testing, and subsequent continued narrowing of literacy, was varied. Hiatt (2017, April 11) reported that a group of 20 Australian academics wrote a letter to the Federal advisory panel expressing their concerns about the proposed testing regime. Hiatt (2017, April 11) described how these academics argued the test would produce a heavy emphasis on teaching knowledge about letter-sound correspondences to the early literacy learner, so limiting literacy learning. David Hornsby, a recognised researcher in the field of knowledge about letter-sound correspondences, published an article through social media also arguing against the testing (Hornsby, 2017). He stressed that the test itself, being a decontextualised list of words and non-words, was meaningless (Hornsby, 2017). Hornsby (2017) also contended that the test presented a definition of literacy that was in tension with definitions presented in national curriculum policies. The Australian Literacy Educators’ Association, the national professional organisation representing literacy teachers, was prolific during the first quarter of 2017 in publications online and in the social media that outlined their concerns. For instance, in a position paper published by the Australian Literacy Educators’ Association, Honan, Connor and Snowball (2017) reviewed research in support of the view that literacy is a rich and broad construct, the learning of which would not benefit from the testing.

In contrast, the Australian Primary Principals’ Association voiced their support of this testing (Australian Primary Principals’ Association, 2017, 30 January). They argued that it would allow teachers to implement relevant evidence-based teaching in the ECEC years in schools for the benefit of improved outcomes.
On 10 April 2017, the Education Minister from England appeared on free-to-air Australian television lauding the positive results of similar testing in England. It seemed that the debates over literacy in Australia of the early 2000s (Snyder, 2008) have not abated. The report of the Federal advisory panel was still to be released at the time of thesis submission, in mid 2017.

**State (WA) Educational Policy 2013 – 2017**

Schools under the jurisdiction of the Department of Education (DoE), WA have continued to operate under the same Director General (DG) as appointed in 2007. The structural configuration of schooling in WA changed in the period 2013-2017. In 2013, Pre-Primary became compulsory and in 2016, Year Seven moved into the secondary school sector. In 2017, public schooling in WA thus comprised of non-compulsory Kindergarten (15 hours per week), for children aged three and a half to four and a half years of age on entry, a compulsory primary sector (Pre-Primary to Year Six) and a secondary sector (Year Seven to Year Twelve). In regards to Kindergarten, four hours of this 15 hours per week was funded through the *National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education - 2016 and 2017* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016b).

At the conclusion of data collection in 2012, WA was still enjoying an economic boom. The then Liberal Party Premier, Colin Barnett, had refused targeted funding for education from the Federal government made available through the *National Plan for School Improvement* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013) as WA seemed able to fund its own programmes. By mid-late 2013, the mining boom at the centre of the WA economy had begun to lessen and the public education system in WA, along with the rest of the public service in WA, was subjected to the first of
many funding cuts. However, the push for improved outcomes to enhance competitiveness, including in literacy, was maintained in State educational policy, reflective of the persistence in neoliberal values.

‘High performance, high care’. At the time of submission of this thesis in mid 2017, DoE (WA) had entered a new phase of strategic planning with the publication of *High Performance, High Care: Strategic Plan for WA Public Schools 2016-2019* (DoE (WA), 2015). It listed four priorities, namely “success for all, high quality teaching, effective leadership and strong governance and support” (DoE (WA), 2015, p. 2).

The term ‘high care’ in the title (DoE (WA), 2015) acknowledged the importance of social-emotional well-being for students’ learning. However, the term ‘high performance’, placed before ‘high care’ (DoE (WA), 2015), indicated the State policy elite’s overriding continued push for improved outcomes to enhance competitiveness. Quality and equity remained as key goals. The policy stressed that results in testing regimes would continue to be used as accountability for improvements.

Literacy remained a priority in this policy (DoE (WA), 2015). Targets for literacy improvement were centred on NAPLAN, with the policy emphasising that schools needed to close the gap in outcomes between high and low performing students.

ECEC continued to have a central role in the push for improved outcomes. For instance, it was explained in *High Performance, High Care: Strategic Plan for WA Public Schools 2016-2019* (DoE (WA), 2015) that there would be the ability for results from the DoE (WA)’s On-Entry Assessment Program to be statistically linked with NAPLAN, with this enabling schools to use the program to explicitly monitor
children’s progress towards NAPLAN. This also served to reinforce the perception that targeted teaching, based on results from the On-Entry Assessment Program, would yield good performances when these children engaged with NAPLAN in later years. Education thus remained emphasised over care in the ECEC years in WA public schools.

**Curriculum and reporting policy in WA.** The School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) was established in WA in late 2012 as an independent statutory authority responsible to the State Government Minister of Education. It is authorised to manage curriculum, assessment and reporting for Kindergarten to Year 12 in WA for all schools across all sectors and thus works in close partnership with the DoE (WA).

Essentially, the policy activity of the School Curriculum and Standards Authority slowed ACARA’s implementation of the national curriculum in WA, with this impinging on the national policy elite’s intentions for a national system of schooling. The School Curriculum and Standards Authority modified aspects of the national curriculum and created the *Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline* (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2017). This organisation also produced policy in relation to curriculum implementation, assessment and reporting, the most recent being *Pre-primary to Year 10: Teaching, Assessing and Reporting Policy and Policy Standards* (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2016).

The School Curriculum and Standards Authority developed the *Western Australian Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines* (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2014). This is intended to offer teachers across the sectors in WA with guidance on specific concepts and knowledge to teach this age group, who predominantly receive their education in schools. It thus provides a ‘bridge’ or
transition for this year group from the broad holistic curriculum of the Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) for COAG, 2009), this being the national curriculum for children aged birth to five years of age, to the learning area specific curriculum of the Australian Curriculum: Version 8.3 (ACARA, 2017b).

**IPS initiative.** The Independent Public School (IPS) initiative in WA had become a central feature of public school education in WA by the time of thesis submission, in mid 2017, as more than half of the public schools in WA were designated as IPS. Many aspects of the IPS initiative reflect persistence of neoliberal competitive values within the public education system in WA. The IPS system devolves administrative responsibility to schools through a student-centred funding model. Schools receive funding from DoE (WA) based on the number of students and have flexibility in how this funding can be used to meet local needs. Each school designated as IPS is ‘reviewed’ by an external body every three years and progress is ‘judged’ against targets in their Business Plan. Results of a school’s review are available online. The overriding priority of an IPS remains to achieve improved outcomes, particularly in relation to NAPLAN results which continue to be available online. This contributes to maintaining the neoliberal competitive notion of ‘the school market’ in WA.

A review by the Centre for Program Evaluation, University of Melbourne (May, 2013) reported that the move to being an IPS was seen as positive by the school itself. They cited stronger relationships with local communities and increased motivation and energy in school staff as some of the benefits to schools.
However, Mundy (2016, September 15) reported that a review in 2016 by the Education and Health Standing Committee (WA) found that the IPS initiative had failed to improve educational outcomes in WA, and exacerbated inequalities in the WA school system. The report of the Education and Health Standing Committee (WA) also argued that the IPS movement had created a ‘two-tier system’ of education provision in WA in which more capable schools receive more benefits, and get better results, and less capable schools, who then receive less benefits, fall further behind (Bickers, 2016, August 16).

Possible tensions in schools. Thus, at the time of thesis submission, in mid 2017, there remained an overriding concerted push for improved outcomes, and enhanced competitiveness, through State educational policy in WA. Literacy education maintained its important role, with improved outcomes in literacy intended to begin in the ECEC years in schools. Reports in the social media, through Facebook groups such as Teaching Pre-Primary WA, indicated that many ECEC teachers in schools were subsequently experiencing increasing pressures to teach literacy content explicitly to enable these improved outcomes in tests, such as On-Entry Assessment Program and NAPLAN. From numerous comments in social media, the overriding impression was that holistic, broad curriculum and play-based pedagogy continued to be marginalised in the ECEC years in WA schools. At the time of thesis submission in mid 2017, there thus remained the possibility of ongoing tensions for ECEC teachers in literacy teaching pedagogy in WA public schools. Edwards (2017) provided teachers with some guidance on how to resolve these tensions. Furthermore, the Office of Early Childhood Learning and Development, DoE (WA), advised teachers in ECEC in schools to adhere to ECEC traditional play-based pedagogy and maintain their teaching of a broad curriculum that encompassed
explicit teaching in an integrated manner (Rosemary Cahill, personal communication, 2017, June 1). This, they argued, will yield the desired improved outcomes.

Part Two: Future Directions

At the time of thesis submission in mid 2017, the current neoliberal based approach to educational policy was seemingly not yielding improved results in literacy outcomes of Australian students, nationally or internationally. Australian schools were continuing to produce inequitable results for students from low and high socioeconomic groups. It seemed that the policy elite needed to re-evaluate Australia’s educational reform agenda in the light of lack of improvements.

In WA, the values of neoliberal competitiveness, embedded as they were within the IPS initiative, appeared to continue to override local factors with possible ongoing tensions in school literacy policy processes relevant to the ECEC years. What follows are some implications for future directions in school literacy policy.

Future Directions in Literacy Policy

Policy from national to State to the local school level may need to broaden the conceptualisation of literacy from an emphasis on teaching ‘constrained’ skills (Paris, 2005) such as letter-sound correspondences, to teaching ‘unconstrained’ skills (Paris, 2005) such as vocabulary and comprehension. Furthermore, Australia needs a literacy curriculum in schools that allows equity in access to literacy learning needed for later school-based learning and for life. Australian society is becoming increasingly technology driven and culturally diverse. The Australian Curriculum: English: Version 8.3 (ACARA, 2017a) included provision for the teaching of
multimodal literacies and recognition of cultural diversity; that is, knowledge students will need in order to participate in Australian society. Future curriculum policy needs to maintain this recognition of multimodal literacies and the different literacies students bring to the classroom. This recognition needs to ‘flow’ in policy through to States and Territories, and schools.

**Future Directions in ECEC Policy**

The early years are important for establishing a solid foundation for children’s later learning, including in literacy. Thus, policy should persist in according importance, and funding, to the ECEC sector. However, policy may need to explicitly recognise the holistic nature of learning that occurs in this age group, particularly in the school context. The perceived ‘push down’ of curriculum content may need to lessen in schools as ‘earlier’ is being found to not be better; that is, results are not improving around the nation. Thus, there may need to be a re-emphasis on the requirement for broad curriculum, as represented in the *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework* (DEEWR for COAG, 2009), that includes focus on all the domains without the increasing focus on the academic domain. Policy at all levels may serve to honour and respect the young child for who they are, rather than focus on what they will become.

**The Case for Trusting the Teachers**

Australian schools need to be supported through policy to lessen the emphasis on teaching to produce data. With this, policy may need to also increase the emphasis on the importance of teacher judgement in measuring progress. This may require a shift in thinking by the policy elite, thinking that instigates trust in the
education sector to produce the required results for enhanced competitiveness, but possibly without the need for constant accountability through testing.

This “transformative change” (Moss, 2014, p 75) could find support through educational policy that is consistently research-based to bridge the gap between policy and practices. Researchers and teachers themselves may need to play an active role in the policy decision-making processes.

Teachers could become knowledgeable and active policy makers themselves. Change could be initiated at the level of schools, with schools informing the policy elite through activities such as action research projects. Teachers may also wish to take the advice of researchers, such as Barblett, Knaus and Barratt-Pugh (2016), and work in networks and collaborative groups in reflecting on current literacy teaching in ECEC and developing ways to achieve improved results, while maintaining integrity in ECEC teaching and learning in schools.

**Part Three: Implications for Further Research:**

This section begins with considering methodological issues in policy analysis studies that are worthy of consideration for further studies. It progresses to addressing some of the limitations and delimitations of this study, so detailing possible areas for further research.

**Policy Analysis Methodology**

There were some aspects of this study’s methodology that are worthy of consideration for further studies. This study adopted a policy trajectory approach and this was useful in the analysis of literacy policy relevant to the ECEC years of
school. It successfully revealed the perspectives of policy actors along the policy trajectory while also elucidating issues of power and control.

The study used a combination of participant and documentary data. Throughout the policy trajectory analysed, participant data often yielded rich and additional viewpoints and allowed the voices of policy actors to be heard. Future policy analysis studies may benefit from inclusion of participant data along the policy trajectory to potentially yield richer descriptions of policy processes.

At the local (school) level, a typology of contextual dimensions to examine the setting of each school (Braun, Ball, Maguire & Hoskins, 2011) revealed factors that impacted upon policy processes and contributed to explanations of differences between schools. There is potential for the analysis of school policy processes to be enriched from examination of the setting of each school through application of such a typology.

Although the study was primarily focused upon policy processes at the school (micro: local) level, it included analysis of policy at the national (macro: Australia) and State (meso: WA) levels. This approach successfully revealed the broad milieu of policy activity in which school policy processes occurred, so enriching the findings. Further policy studies focused at the school level of the policy trajectory may benefit from encompassing the national and State levels, as well as the broader ‘global’ trends in educational policy.
Limitations, Delimitations and Possible Further Research

There were a number of issues that emerged in the findings that were not pursued. There were also delimitations of the study aimed at reducing the scope of data collection and analysis in order to make the project manageable. These limitations and delimitations are used to identify areas for further investigation.

The study interviewed members of the policy elite, teachers and leaders but did not interview other stakeholder groups in the education process such as parents and students. Insights about policy processes at the school level would benefit from further research that involves these other stakeholder groups. There were also no observations of teaching or artefacts of students’ work. Further research could include such a focus to enable richer analysis of the production and enactment of school literacy policy by teachers.

Furthermore, school participant teachers in the ECEC years in schools were predominantly teachers in Pre-Primary and Kindergarten, this driven in part by who was made available to the researcher by the Principal of each school. Further studies could investigate perspectives of what constitutes ECEC in schools and also incorporate the scope of the ECEC years in schools to include Years One and Two.

The study was restricted to the public school sector of WA. Further research would add richness to this data by including perspectives from the non-government sector within WA and other States and Territories in Australia.

At times, participants in this study referred to the national curriculum, this being the Australian Curriculum: Version 2.0 (ACARA, 2011a) at the time of data collection in late 2012. This was not pursued as it was still emerging in use in schools in WA during late 2012. Further research could investigate the ongoing
impact of this national curriculum on literacy and literacy teaching within the ECEC years in WA schools.

The study raised issues in relation to leadership and change management in each school during literacy policy processes. Further research in this area could provide additional insights into the role of school leaders in school policy processes.

This study identified the possible need for a major shift in the underlying ideology of Australian educational policy to achieve the aims of the policy elite. Further research could inform such a shift by continuing to investigate the education systems of countries that are performing well in the international arena while also moving beyond the confines of neoliberalism. Furthermore, such a shift may also require “transformative change” (Moss, 2014, p 75) to be initiated by policy actors at the local level, in schools. This will, in turn, need knowledgeable teachers who are supported through appropriate professional learning. Continued research could inform teachers on the effectiveness of different models of professional learning.

**Conclusion of the Thesis**

This study aimed to investigate the production and enactment of school literacy policy in an Australian context, with a focus on ECEC teachers. While the findings of this study are specific to the WA context of selected public schools, they can provide significant ‘food for thought’ in other jurisdictions.

The policy trajectory analysis which extended between national, State and local (school) levels successfully elucidated the contestation and struggles as policy became practices. In the process, the study identified the possibility of adverse impacts for students’ literacy learning in the ECEC years in schools in Australia.
In a commentary about literacy teaching in Australia, a renowned Australian researcher in the field of literacy said: “The assumption is that... earlier is better...as the stakes go up...but we are setting up conditions for children to fail earlier” (Luke, June 2017). He suggested that the way forward for improved results was for educational policies to enable students in the ECEC years to establish solid foundations in literacy through reinforcing the need to teach the broader aspects of literacy, such as oral language, rather than persist in the focus on teaching explicit literacy content. Perhaps the expressed wishes of a participant in this study can then be fulfilled. In late 2012, the participant said “*make sure that the integrity of literacy teaching remains*”. 
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doi:10.1080/0268093970120509


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*National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy: Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy.* (2010). Retrieved from the National Assessment Program website


Nix, R. L., Bierman, K. L., Domitrovich, C. E., & Gill, S. (2013). Promoting children's social-emotional skills in preschool can enhance academic and


Roberts-Holmes, G. (2015). The ‘datafication’ of early years pedagogy: ‘If the teaching is good, the data should be good and if there’s bad teaching, there is bad data’. *Journal of Education Policy, 30*(3), 302-315. doi:10.1080/02680939.2014.924561


### Appendix A: Timeline of Major Events.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL</th>
<th>STATE (WESTERN AUSTRALIA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) formed (International)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td><em>Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia</em> (Australian Education Council, 1989), commonly called the <em>Hobart Declaration</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Council of Australian Governments (COAG) formed in Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td><em>Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century</em> (Australian Education Council, 1999), commonly called the <em>Adelaide Declaration</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td><em>Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction</em> (National Reading Panel, 2000) (America)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) first administered to 15 year olds in various countries (International)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Australia is second in reading in PISA (International)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Open letter addressed to the Australian Federal Minister of Education, Dr Brendan Nelson, signed by a group of Australian academics working within the areas of linguistics, cognitive science and psychology.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td><em>Teaching reading: National inquiry into the teaching of literacy</em> (Rowe, 2005) (Australia)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event / Publication</td>
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<tr>
<td>------</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td><em>Starting Strong II Early Childhood Education and Care</em> (OECD)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Literacy and numeracy review taskforce: The final report</em> (Department of Education and Training (DET), WA, 2006)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Australia reported to be seventh in reading in PISA, 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Director General (DG) appointed for Department of Education (DoE) (WA)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Late 2007</td>
<td><em>Director General’s Classroom First Strategy</em> (DoE (WA), 2007)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td><em>Quality Education: The Case for an Education Revolution in Our Schools</em> (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), 2008) (Australia)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td><em>Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians</em> (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), 2008) (Australia)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td><em>National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy</em> (COAG, 2008b)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td><em>National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education</em> (COAG, 2008a)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td><em>Plan for Public Schools 2008-2011</em> (DET (WA), 2008)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) first implemented across Australia</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td><em>National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy: Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy, 2008</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td><em>National Education Agreement</em> (COAG, 2009b)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td><em>National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care</em> (COAG, 2009c)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

WA performs ‘poorly’ in NAPLAN
(This included a 5 year agreement to provide funding for ‘Universal Access’).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (DEEWR for COAG, 2009), also called The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF): national curriculum for children 0-5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Australian Early Developmental Index (AEDI) first implemented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy: Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy, 2009 Poor results in WA persist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>On-Entry Assessment Program introduced by DoE (WA) for mandated administration in Pre-Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>MySchool website launched by Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy: Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy, 2010 Poor results in WA persist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Australia reported to be seventh in reading in PISA, 2009 (International)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>First round of Independent Public Schools (IPS) announced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Octobe r 2011</td>
<td>Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs ratified the Foundation to Year 10 Achievement Standards for the first four learning areas of the national curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td><em>The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Version 3.0</em> (ACARA, 2011b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td><em>Australian Curriculum: Version 2.0</em> (ACARA, 2011a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td><em>Progressing Classroom First</em> (DoE (WA), 2011a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td><em>The Early Years of Schooling: An Initiative of the Director General’s Classroom First Strategy</em> (DoE (WA), 2011b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>National Quality Framework was introduced in Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Australia reported to be tenth in reading in PISA, 2012 (International)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Participant Information and Consent Forms: National and State Levels.

Dear ____________________,

I invite you to participate in a research into the implementation of whole school literacy policy by early childhood teachers in Western Australia public education schools. Mrs Tamara Bromley, a PhD candidate at the University of WA, Graduate School of Education, is conducting the research under my supervision and in fulfilment of her PhD.

Participation in this research means that you will be interviewed by Tamara Bromley at a time that is convenient to you for a maximum of 40 minutes. This will be a semi-structured interview with some broad questions relevant to whole school literacy policy development and the role of your department/organisation in this policy process. All interviews will be audio recorded and you will have the opportunity to view the transcript. Identifying information will be removed from the transcript and pseudonyms will be used in any report of the research.

The audio recordings will be stored in a locked office and then destroyed 5 years after completion of the research project. Transcripts will undergo analysis for issues and themes and the report will present the summary results.

Approval to conduct this research has been provided by The University of Western Australia, in accordance with its ethics review and approval procedures. Please feel free to raise any questions or issues with Tamara or myself at any time. If you are not satisfied with the response, you may contact the Human Research Ethics Office at The University of Western Australia on (08) 6488 3703 or by emailing to hreo-research@uwa.edu.au.

All research participants are entitled to retain a copy of any Participant Information and/or Participant Consent Form relating to this research project.
We are currently in a period of change and debate in the implementation of literacy curriculum in early childhood. This is an important research project that will provide some direction and support to schools striving to achieve improved literacy outcomes. I hope that you will agree to participate in this research. However, participation is voluntary and, even after agreeing to participate, you remain free to withdraw your participation at any time.

If you have any queries about this research, please do not hesitate to contact me on 68442301 or grace.oakley@uwa.edu.au.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Grace Oakley
Associate Professor
Graduate School of Education
University of Western Australia
30 July 2012
Participant consent form

I (the participant) have read the information provided and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realising that I may withdraw at any time without reason and without prejudice.

I understand that all identifiable (attributable) information that I provide is treated as strictly confidential and will not be released by the investigator in any form that may identify me. The only exception to this principle of confidentiality is if documents are required by law.

I have been advised as to what data is being collected, the purpose for collecting the data, and what will be done with the data upon completion of the research.

I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published provided my name or other identifying information is not used.

_________________________  _______________________
Participant Date
Appendix C: Participant Information and Consent Forms: School Level

Our ref: 
Your ref: 

Dear ____________________,

I invite you and your staff to participate in a research into the implementation of whole school literacy policy by early childhood teachers in Western Australia public education schools. Mrs Tamara Bromley, a PhD candidate at the Graduate School of Education, the University of Western Australia, is conducting the research under my supervision and in fulfilment of her PhD.

If you agree to your school’s participation, you will become one of three case study schools in the research. I seek access for Tamara Bromley to interview you, your curriculum leader in literacy (be they the Deputy and/or teacher-leader) and the early childhood teachers from Kindergarten to Year 3 in your school during the early part of term 4 2012.

Each participant will be interviewed by Tamara Bromley at a time that is convenient for the participant, for a maximum of 40 minutes each. There will be the opportunity for the early childhood teachers to be offered a group interview, depending on their availability within their timetables, with a follow-up individual interview if required and agreed to by the teacher.

Each interview will be semi-structured with some broad questions relevant to whole school literacy policy development and the role of the interviewee in, and their impressions of, this policy process. Teachers will be invited to bring artefacts of students’ work relevant to the implementation of the school’s literacy policy. However, they will be asked to remove all identifying information from these artefacts before bringing them to the interviews, should copies wish to be taken. In addition, Tamara will be requesting school leaders to allow her to see relevant documentation to the school’s literacy policy such as the policy itself, supporting planning tools, etc. Once again, we request that all identifying information be removed from such documents prior to the interview, should copies wish to be taken.
All interviews will be audio recorded, with the permission of the participants, and each interviewee will have the opportunity to view the transcript. Identifying information will be removed from the transcript and pseudonyms will be used in any report of the research. The identity of the participants and the school will not be disclosed at any time, except in circumstances that require reporting under the Department of Education Child Protection policy, or where the research team is legally required to disclose that information. Participant privacy, and the confidentiality of information disclosed by participants, is assured at all other times.

The audio recordings and all data collected will be stored in a locked office and then destroyed 5 years after completion of the research project. Transcripts will undergo analysis for issues and themes and the report will present the summary results.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. If any member of the participant group decides to participate and then later changes their mind, they are able to withdraw their participation at any time.

Participation in this research will provide your school with an opportunity to reflect upon your literacy policy processes. You will be provided with a summary of the issues relevant to your school for further discussion by your school leaders and staff. Furthermore, a summary of the research findings will be made available to you in late 2015 or early 2016.

Approval to conduct this research has been provided by The University of Western Australia, in accordance with its ethics review and approval procedures. Please feel free to raise any questions or issues with Tamara or myself at any time. If you are not satisfied with the response, you may contact the Human Research Ethics Office at The University of Western Australia on (08) 6488 3703 or by emailing to hreo-research@uwa.edu.au.

All research participants are entitled to retain a copy of any Participant Information and/or Participant Consent Form relating to this research project. We are currently in a period of change and debate in the implementation of literacy curriculum in early childhood. This is an important research project that will provide some direction and support to schools striving to achieve improved literacy outcomes. I hope that you will agree to participate in this research.

If you have any queries about this research, please do not hesitate to contact me on 68442301 or grace.oakley@uwa.edu.au.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Grace Oakley
Associate Professor
Graduate School of Education
University of Western Australia
30 July 2012
Consent Form: Principals

- I have read this document and understand the aims, procedures, and risks of this project, as described within it.

- For any questions I may have had, I have taken up the invitation to ask those questions, and I am satisfied with the answers I received.

- I am willing for [insert name of Department site] to become involved in the research project, as described.

- I understand that participation in the project is entirely voluntarily.

- I understand that [insert name of Department site] is free to withdraw its participation at any time, without affecting the relationship with the research team or the University of WA.

- I understand that this research may be published in a journal, conference proceedings and/or thesis, provided that the participants or the school are not identified in any way.

- I understand that [insert name of Department site] will be provided with a copy of the findings from this research upon its completion.

Name of Site Manager (printed):

Signature: ____________________________ Date: / / 

____________________________
Dear ____________________,

I invite you to participate in a research into the implementation of whole school literacy policy by early childhood teachers in Western Australia public education schools. Mrs Tamara Bromley, a PhD candidate at the University of WA, Graduate School of Education, is conducting the research under my supervision and in fulfilment of her PhD.

Participation in this research means that you will be interviewed by Tamara Bromley at a time that is convenient for a maximum of 40 minutes. Initially, this may be through a group interview with some of your colleagues, depending on your availability within the timetable. If this happens, an individual interview may also be available as a follow up if you desire.

Each interview will be semi-structured with some broad questions relevant to whole school literacy policy development and your role in and impressions of this policy process. You are invited to bring along some classroom artefacts or planning documents that represent your literacy teaching and the children’s literacy learning. Please remove any identifying information from these documents should they be copied.

All interviews will be audio recorded and you will have the opportunity to view the transcript. Identifying information will be removed from the transcript and pseudonyms will be used in any report of the research. The identity of the participants and the school will not be disclosed at any time, except in circumstances that require reporting under the Department of Education Child Protection policy, or where the research team is legally required to disclose that information. Participant privacy, and the confidentiality of information disclosed by participants, is assured at all other times.
The audio recordings will be stored in a locked office and then destroyed 5 years after completion of the research project. Transcripts will undergo analysis for issues and themes and the report will present the summary results.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. If any member of the participant group decides to participate and then later changes their mind, they are able to withdraw their participation at any time.

Participation in this research will provide your school with an opportunity to reflect upon your literacy policy processes. You will be provided with a summary of the issues relevant to your school for further discussion by your School Leaders and staff.

Approval to conduct this research has been provided by The University of Western Australia, in accordance with its ethics review and approval procedures. Please feel free to raise any questions or issues with Tamara or myself at any time. If you are not satisfied with the response, you may contact the Human Research Ethics Office at The University of Western Australia on (08) 6488 3703 or by emailing to hreo-research@uwa.edu.au.

All research participants are entitled to retain a copy of any Participant Information and/or Participant Consent Form relating to this research project.

We are currently in a period of change and debate in the implementation of literacy curriculum in early childhood. This is an important research project that will provide some direction and support to schools striving to achieve improved literacy outcomes. I hope that you will agree to participate in this research.

If you have any queries about this research, please do not hesitate to contact me on 64882301 or grace.oakley@uwa.edu.au.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Grace Oakley
Associate Professor
Graduate School of Education
University of Western Australia
Consent Form: Teachers

- I have read and understood the information letter about the project, or have had it explained to me in language I understand.

- I have taken up the invitation to ask any questions I may have had, and am satisfied with the answers I received.

- I understand that participation in the project is entirely voluntarily.

- I am willing to become involved in the project, as described.

- I understand I am free to withdraw that participation at any time without affecting my relationship with the University of Western Australia.

- I give permission for my contribution to this research to be published in a journal, conference proceedings and/or thesis provided that I or the school is not identified in any way.

- I understand that I can request a summary of findings once the research has been completed.

Name of Participant (printed):

______________________________

Signature of Participant: ____________________________ Date: / / 

______________________________
Appendix D: Interview Questions: National and State Levels

These questions were used as the basis for semi-structured interviews (see Chapter 5) which were conducted with all participants at the macro (national: Australian) and meso (State: WA) levels of the literacy policy trajectory investigated.

Research question 1: What are the key influences on literacy policy identified along the policy trajectory, at macro (national: Australia), meso (State: WA) and micro (local: school) levels? What do you see influences construction of literacy policy? How does this influence school literacy policy?

Research question 2: What are the main characteristics of literacy policy texts at macro (national: Australia), meso (State: WA) and micro (local: school) levels and how are they produced? How has literacy policy been constructed? What are the processes? What are the characteristics? Are there any particular emphases on ECEC years? How different or similar should it look for the ECEC years, if at all? What is your Department’s/ organisation’s role in the construction of literacy policy?

Research question 3: How is school literacy policy being enacted by ECEC teachers in public schools in the State of WA? What kinds of processes are schools required to put into place to implement the policies? What are the expectations?

Research question 4: What are the longer term outcomes of the enactment of school literacy policy? What is the outcome of having a school literacy policy for teachers? For children’s learning? For the child?
Appendix E: Interview Questions: School Level

These questions were used as the basis for semi-structured interviews (see Chapter 5) which were conducted with all participants in the three case study schools at the micro (local: school) level of the literacy policy trajectory investigated.

Research question 1: What are the key influences on literacy policy identified along the policy trajectory, at macro (national: Australia), meso (State: WA) and micro (local: school) levels?
What influences the construction of literacy policy in your school? In your opinion, what are the “outside” influences, ie from a national or even international arenas, to how literacy policy is constructed in schools?

Research question 2: What are the main characteristics of literacy policy texts at macro (national: Australia), meso (State: WA) and micro (local: school) levels and how are they produced?
When I say “school literacy policy”, what comes to mind?
How has the school’s literacy policy been constructed? What are the processes? Who is involved? What are the characteristics?
Are there any particular emphases for the ECEC years? How different or similar should it look for the ECEC years, if at all?

Research question 3: How is school literacy policy being enacted by ECEC teachers in public schools in the State of WA?
What does your school do with literacy policies? What processes are in place to implement the policies? In what ways are these processes adequate and appropriate?

Research question 4: What are the longer term outcomes of the enactment of school literacy policy?
In your opinion, what is the outcome of your school literacy policy processes for teachers? For children’s learning? For the child?